

Music & Letters

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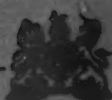
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Music and Letters

JANUARY, 1926.

VOLUME VII.

NUMBER 1

THE COMPETITION

THE prize for an essay on the subject of "Opera," which was announced in the July issue, has been awarded to

MR. DYNELEY HUSSEY,

whose essay appears herein. The adjudicators mentioned favourably that of Miss Maisie Radford, which will appear in the next issue, and commended that by Mr. Sydney Grew.

The giver of the prize generously offers another for next year.

The subject this time is to be an English acting version of the libretto of Gounod's opera, *Faust*.

The prize is, in the first instance, ten guineas, and this will be awarded in any case, provided there is competition. Should the successful version be judged to be of real merit, the prize may be increased to twenty-five guineas; or this amount may be divided between the authors of two equal versions at the discretion of the judges.

The judges will be Mr. Frederic Austin and two assessors appointed by him, and their decision shall be final.

Conditions.—Versions must be type-written, on one side of the paper only, and be paged to correspond as closely as possible with the pages of Chappell's new and revised edition of the opera. The version should

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- (b) bear a motto and an identifying symbol, and

(c) be accompanied by a sealed envelope, marked outside to correspond with (b), and containing the name and address of its author. Stamps for return need not be enclosed.

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The packets containing them should be marked "Libretto" in the top left-hand corner.

It is intended to announce the result of the competition in the issue of MUSIC AND LETTERS which appears on December 15.

Omissions.—For the purpose of this competition those omissions are recognised which are noted in the preface to Chappell's edition.

Hints and Suggestions.—There is no objection to a syndicate of authors; on the contrary, friendly criticism is likely to produce a good result.

The musical metre, i.e., distribution of long and short syllables, may be altered at discretion; such alteration should be clearly shown by note-lengths placed above the text. The rhymes need not follow exactly the scheme of the original.

The object is to make, by hook or crook, a really satisfactory acting version; not something which looks well in a book, but which sounds well when sung, which tells the story clearly, which places the words just as we say them, accenting the syllables we naturally accent, with a minimum of inversions.

A version rather than a translation is desired; literal fidelity to the original is unnecessary. In that respect, M. E. Brown's version of *Costi fan tutte* (Novello), although it is, of course, unlike *Faust*, a comic opera, may be mentioned as a good example.

NATIONALISM AND OPERA

THE outlook for British opera is at the moment brighter than it has been at any time during the past two hundred years. That is to say, it is less gloomy. There is a conscious effort towards the production of work which will reflect our national spirit to the same degree that was achieved in the art of painting by Constable and Old Crome, and in the art of poetry by a long line of illustrious men. Hitherto such efforts have, since the death of Purcell, been sporadic and ill-directed. Our operatic composers have been content to copy foreign models rather than evolve a form and idiom of their own, with inevitably mediocre results. But now at last the too slavish admiration of Italian and German ideals has spent itself, partly because for the moment it seems as if the musical fertility of those two countries was itself exhausted; and we have witnessed during the past few years a real tendency towards an English musical renaissance. Indeed it may be averred with some show of justice that the standard of the musical output in England is at the present day higher than in any other country. That I may not be accused of chauvinism, I will add that competition for the honour is not severe. There is no reason, therefore, why England, which produced Byrd and Purcell, should not in the near future regain the high place in the musical world which she held during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and, since opera is one of the chief, if not one of the essential, musical activities, this is an apt moment to consider the possibilities of establishing a truly national school of opera comparable with the achievements of the Italians and the Germans. It will be useful to review briefly the tendencies which have fostered the production of opera in other countries. For we may learn from the successes and, still more, from the failures of other nations what to do and what to avoid. It will be necessary, however, to make a careful distinction between the qualities in foreign opera which have general application, and those which are peculiar to the nation in question.

I

If we survey the history of opera, it will be observed that two main influences have dominated its development from the beginning until the present day. The first was mainly emotional and came from Italy; the second was more intellectual and of German origin. This

division may be made for the sake of convenience, and must not be pressed too far. For we are faced at the outset with the fact that as early as 1594—that is to say in the very year of the performance of Peri's *Dafne*—Orazio Vecchi propounded in his introduction to *L'Amfiparnasso*, *commedia armonica*, some of the very ideas which have been considered by every operatic theorist down to the present day. For instance, he says of his work:—

“ Its moral intention will be less than that of simple comedy, for music applies itself to the passions rather than to the reason, and hence I have been compelled to use reflective elements with moderation. Moreover, the action has less scope for development, spoken words being more rapid than song;* so it is expedient to condense, to restrict, to suppress details, and to take only the capital situations. The imagination ought to supply the rest.” Had he said “ the music ” in place of “ the imagination,” Vecchi would have stated with precision the central requirement of operatic theory. But, although Vecchi applied the keen intelligence of a Renaissance Italian to the problem of combining drama with music, it will be observed that he assumes that the result will appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect, if again one may make a rough and ready distinction.

This is not the place for a full examination of the origins of Italian opera. It is well, however, to rebut the superficial assumption of some historians and many amateurs that opera was invented as an entirely new form by a group of young Florentine nobles, who were dilettanti musicians and who wished to revive the splendours of Greek tragedy. The facts are not so simple as that; and, if they were, we should be faced with the unparalleled phenomenon of an art-form being created and brought within speaking distance of perfection in a space of fifteen years. For Monteverde's *Orfeo* was produced at Mantua in 1607. But the existence of Vecchi's madrigal-dramas, to say nothing of his very clear vision of the problems which the combination of music and drama present, shows that the tendency towards opera was of much longer standing. That tendency can be traced back to the century before. For about 1472 there was produced, also at Mantua, a lyric drama by Angelo Poliziano called *Favola di Orfeo*. It is not without significance that this, the true ancestor of opera, should have been based upon the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, which was later to inspire operatic composers down to the days of Gluck. Nor is it

* It is interesting to compare with this statement the words of a very modern critic, Mr. Roger Fry, who writes in the *Nation and Athenaeum* of 28th February, 1925:—“ In the high pitch of dramatic tensivity which Wagner's themes implied, the tempo of passionate speech seemed to me to be altogether at variance with any possible tempo of the analogous musical development.”

unnatural that such a story should give rise to the idea of combining music with drama, since music is inherent in it. No more need be said of the *Favola di Orfeo* than that it has greater affinities with the bucolic dialogues of Virgil, who was then the fashionable poet, than with the Greek drama, which had not yet been fully discovered.*

The century, which intervened between Poliziano's lyric drama and the activities of Peri and Caccini, contains nothing in the way of operatic work except the madrigal-dramas, of which Vecchi's *L'Amfiparnasso* is an example. In this the music is written in five parts, the two upper parts represented one side of the dialogue and the two lowest took the other side, while the middle voice threw its weight into whichever part was at the moment most important. There was no attempt to make the music dramatic in the modern sense, and these madrigal-dramas were nearly always burlesques.† Their importance in operatic history is that they are the ancestors of the typically Italian *opera buffa*, of which *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* is the example best-known in England. The link with Mozart is too obvious to require more than mention.

The Florentine innovators had behind them a long tradition of dramatic performances with music, and, as we have seen, the problems of combining the two arts had been faced by those against whose methods of composition they reacted. For the direction taken by Peri and Caccini was not towards a development of the madrigal-drama; they were wholly opposed to the polyphonic style. But we can no more explain Peri's *Dafne* without the madrigal-drama than we can explain *Pelléas et Mélisande* without *Tristan*. And I have indulged in this apparently irrelevant dissertation upon the origins of opera, because it is too often accepted that the first stage in the development of the new form was completed by Monteverde after a few experiments by some young amateurs who were considerably his juniors. From which it is argued that we may expect masterpieces of English opera within a few years of our setting our minds to produce opera at all.

But there was another element in existing musical conditions, which drove the Florentines to revolt and which has a more important bearing on our problem. Although at this time no music for solo voice had been written—a fact which it is difficult for us to grasp—the singers of the day had developed their technique to a very high

* Those who wish for an account of the work will find one in W. J. Henderson's *Forerunners of Italian Opera*. The poem has been translated by Symonds and is printed in his *Sketches and Studies of Italy*, pp. 217-224.

† For further information see Romain Rolland's *Histoire de l'Opéra en Europe avant Lulli et Scarlatti* and W. J. Henderson's *Forerunners of Italian Opera*, which quotes examples of the music. Examples will also be found in Volume III of the *Oxford History of Music*.

standard and exhibited it by singing one part of a madrigal with florid decorations, while other parts were played upon instruments by themselves or other musicians. The solos of Poliziano's *Orfeo* must have been of this nature. One of the most notable characteristics, and the chief danger, of Italian opera, was, therefore, in existence before opera itself. The Florentine innovators were disgusted by the meretriciousness of these displays, which are comparable in the music of our day only with the *cadenzas* in an instrumental concerto, just as Gluck revolted against the vanity of the Italian singers in Paris and Wagner against the feeble tunefulness which Donizetti eked out with vocal pyrotechnics. It must not be forgotten that the performances of good singers who happened also to be good artists were probably very beautiful, even as was Joachim's *cadenza* in Brahms's violin concerto. However, the rule held good of the majority of singers then as now, that they must be held innocent of intelligence until proved guilty.

But, although Peri and Caccini raised up for themselves an austere ideal of setting the words of the drama to music so that the meaning should be made clear and be emphasised by the vocal line, they did not conform wholly to this ideal in practice. The native tendency of the Italian to let himself go in a rush of vocalisation was too much for them. But, in contradistinction to the improvisers, Caccini wrote down what was to be sung and he uses his embellishments as a rule with discretion and sometimes with the greatest aptness. Unfortunately the successors of the pioneers did not maintain the same level of artistic conscience, so that two centuries later we find Rossini, disgusted with the bad taste of improvising singers, writing out the exact notes he wanted them to sing!

This tendency to embellish their melodies and the fact that Italian opera is, above all things, melodic show that the most important thing in music to the Italian is the human voice. So long as that is present in fine quality, he will put up with any amount of absurdity in the words or triviality in the music. Without this fact, the existence of such works as *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Lucrezia Borgia* in an intelligent and civilised era would be simply inexplicable. The Italian evidently seizes upon the emotional pleasure of the moment and so long as his ears are tickled by a fine voice and a good tune, he is satisfied. But it is not thus that works of lasting merit are created and we get the result that all the great Italian operas, which were written before the nineteenth century and which have survived on the stage, were composed by Germans and Austrians, by Handel,* Gluck and Mozart. Monteverdi is a possible exception, though

* Handel's *Giulio Cesare* and *Rodelinda* have lately been revived in Germany, where they have had, I am assured by Mr. E. J. Dent, a genuine success and not merely the *r  clame* of historical interest.

his *Orfeo* can hardly be said to keep the stage. Alessandro Scarlatti is far more important as a link in the development of the symphonic form than as a composer of operas. The only one of his dramatic works which could be staged to-day with any hope of success is the little comedy, *Il Trionfo dell' Onore*, which might take its place beside Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona*.

II

This strange result needs some explanation. For we cannot just dismiss it with the statement that Handel, Gluck and Mozart were better composers than Bononcini, Piccinni and Cimarosa. That explains nothing. Nor can we hope to probe the secrets of Nature and tabulate the apparently capricious laws which govern the production of genius—at least not in a short article directed to other ends. But may we not find a partial explanation in the view of music taken by the German, just as the Italian's view explains the virtues and vices of his opera? In a recent issue of *MUSIC AND LETTERS* Mr. E. J. Dent pointed out that whereas the instinct of the Italian is to express himself in song, in Central Europe man is born with a fiddle under his chin. In other words, the German turns to instrumental music when he wishes to express himself. The difference in temperament may be attributed, at least in part, to the difference of language. Italian is a quickly moving language and very simple in its sounds, both vowels and consonants. German is heavy, slow and complex. This is not to repeat the old fallacy about German being "unsingable," but there was this much truth in the attitude taken up by the opponents of German that it was certainly not singable after the methods and to the music of the Italians. You cannot sing German or English "in Italian," and one of the great stumbling-blocks to performances of foreign operas in English is that they are not (and often cannot be) sung in our language, although the actual words are those of our mother-tongue.

But, given a composer belonging to a nationality which thinks in terms of instrumental music, yet employing the musical idiom and the language of a nation which is given to singing, you have in the result an approximation to the golden mean. Further it must be remembered that Gluck and Mozart, besides having had experience in Italy, were Austrians, and that the culture of Vienna in the eighteenth century was far more akin to Italy than to Northern Germany. I think it will be conceded, even by our modern Samuel Butlers, that as a composer of operas Handel is inferior to both Gluck and Mozart, and his inferiority is certainly not attributable, at least so far as Gluck is concerned, to his being a lesser musician. May it not be

due to the fact that his essentially Teutonic temperament was out of key with the medium of Italian opera? The only thing, which enabled him to achieve so great and, in the light of facts, so astonishing a success in this alien medium, was his power of assimilating the qualities of other people without becoming a slave to them, a power which he shared with the other great Germanic composers of his century, Bach, Gluck, Haydn and Mozart. But Handel and Bach did not, I think owing to their Teutonic nationality, assimilate the Italian style as completely as did their successors. I cannot do better than quote Mr. Dent again. Handel, he says,* "set Italian as he set English, like a foreigner, never approaching that delicate intimacy of declamation which is as characteristic a quality of Scarlatti as of Purcell." And it must be remembered that a literary appreciation of this sort may take effect not only in impassioned recitative, but also in the most melodious and florid of arias. Handel's *coloratura* is fairly effective in many cases, but it is commonplace in detail; a florid passage by Handel is as different from one by Scarlatti as a *cadenza* of Liszt is from a *cadenza* of Chopin.

Nevertheless, as musical works, Handel's operas are superior to those of Scarlatti. I think their superiority is due, at least in part, to the greater use he makes of the orchestra. We begin to see in him already the German tendency to set the instrumentalists on a level with the singers, which ended finally in the complete submersion of the latter, the abolition of the stage altogether and the enactment of the whole drama by the orchestra, as in the tone-poems of Richard Strauss. It would be difficult to find anything in contemporary opera by an Italian comparable with the lovely phrase which opens Jupiter's air in *Semele*, "Where'er you walk." I take that as an example because it is familiar. It would hardly be unfair to say that here the musical interest of the accompaniment is equal to that of the voice-part. This tendency was developed by Gluck, who added to it the other German characteristic I have mentioned, the appeal to the intellect. For Gluck propounded once more the theories, which Caccini had stated at the outset, and attempted to make the music entirely subservient to the words of the drama. In the preface to *Alceste* he says:—

"I endeavoured to reduce music to its proper function, that of seconding poetry by enforcing the expression of the sentiment and the interest of the situations without interrupting the action or weakening it by superfluous ornament."

In his practice he sowed the seed which was to blossom in Weber and in Wagner. In the interval came Mozart, who also paid far more

* *Alessandro Scarlatti, his life and works*, p. 201.

attention to the orchestra than the Italians, and achieved the most perfect balance between the singers and the accompaniment that has yet been heard. Mozart was, too, the first considerable composer to turn his attention to opera in German. But it can hardly be said that he developed in *Die Entführung* or *Die Zauberflöte* a distinctive and consistent German style, though the big bass airs in these two operas are as German as those of Leporello and Figaro (and, for that matter, Pedrillo) are Italian. These operas are, indeed, German in their form, that of the *Singspiel*, rather than in their musical idiom. Papageno is Viennese in origin and his airs are songs rather than *arias*, but his place in the scheme is that of a *buffo* character in Italian opera.

It was not until the beginning of last century that, with the coming of the Romantic movement, German opera came fully into its own heritage. There had, as in the case of Italy, been a long period of preparation during which the form was working itself out in the hands of minor composers who have long been forgotten. *Die Zauberflöte* was the first sign of something great, and it is in the nature of a "sport." Then when the time was ripe, there came Weber and that strange unbalanced work of genius, *Fidelio*, the unhappy experiments of Schubert, and finally the crowning masterpieces of Richard Wagner. In his work we see the subordination of the drama to the music carried to the furthest extreme possible, so that one may say that the drama has become music. For, whatever Wagner may have said in his many treatises and with all respect to Mr. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, it is as musician and not as poet that Wagner retains and always will retain his hold upon mankind. He was great as a poet only in that he saw instinctively the kind of thing that he needed as a structure for his music and was able to provide it.

III

This very cursory account of the development of opera in Italy and in Germany supplies us with one or two lessons which we may apply to our own case. But we need not deduce from the fact that the best Italian operas were written by alien composers the result that the masterpieces of English opera will be written by the Chinese, or that our composers are likely to find their true medium in Choctaw. The predominance of Italian culture throughout Europe, which was due to the start obtained by that country when it went in for the revival of learning, accounts for the paradox, and there is no parallel for it at the present day. Two important things stand out. First, there has always been a long period of preparation before the musical genius

of a nation has blossomed out. Many generations of Bachs flowed into that mighty river the Germans call "Joh.Seb." Secondly, as water finds its own level, a language finds its own best means of expression in music. It will have been observed, for instance, that Wagner's works, when sung in English, seem to drag; and they are often taken at *tempi* much faster than the German conductors allow in order to compensate for this. An even more striking example is provided by an English-born composer, Delius, whose *Mass of Life* and *The Village Romeo and Juliet* sound, as settings of words, are intolerably tedious in English because they were written to German texts which will stand the strain of a slower pace.

The English language combines the possibilities of speed, which Italian has, with an extraordinary richness and variety both of vowels and consonants. The complexity of most of our vowel-sounds makes them unsuitable for sustaining, because the singer inevitably resolves the sound into its component parts, and we get a trisyllable instead of a triphthong. These sounds can be dodged by the skilful singer; but they need the dodging, unlike the Italian vowels. Our consonants, too, are vastly more important in proportion to the vowels than in the Italian language. But, even more important than the components of speech, is the manner of using it. It is often very difficult to recognise a single letter taken from a cursive script, which is yet perfectly legible when the whole word or sentence is seen. Englishmen may be said to talk in "cursive," while Italians, as those who went to the recent season of Pirandello's plays will recognise, speak in "copper-plate." Every syllable is given its full value.

These facts have been recognised by all English composers who have written vocal music of any value. It is the failure to recognise them that makes the vocal writing of Elgar and Delius so unsatisfactory and a similar failure contributed to the barrenness of the period which followed the death of Purcell and persisted within living memory. The influence of Handel undoubtedly accentuated the failure of English music; for composers went on trying to write *Largo's* in English. But the influence was negative rather than positive in its effect. It could not have smothered genius, had genius existed; but it did prevent the creation of the right atmosphere for the preparation, which, I have suggested, precedes the coming of genius.

This aspect of the matter seems to me by far the most useful for examination in connection with the subject under discussion. For it would be quite futile for a critic to suggest what kind of music will be written by the composer of the future. He can go no further than the statement of the capacities and limitations of the language or other *media* which the composer is to use, since he will have to work within those capacities and limitations. But, before passing on to

the main point, it may be well to note one fact about English opera in the past. For there were the beginnings of a flourishing school of opera which culminated in Purcell. It originated in the provision of incidental music for plays in scenes dealing with religious ceremonies, supernatural persons or such things as triumphal processions. The Masques, of course, contributed their quota towards the development of the school, but these are not our concern for the moment. The significant fact is that all the English operas of that period retain these characteristics, especially the presence of the supernatural characters, witches, fairies, and various apparitions. I may link up with this the fact that one of the most successful modern essays in English opera is Mr. Nicholas Gatty's *The Tempest*, a work which does carry on the tradition of Purcell without being an antiquarian imitation. This characteristic in our opera may be compared with the prevalence in Germany of the fairy-tale element, which is conspicuously absent from Italian works.

IV

The preparation, of which I have spoken and in which it is possible for each of us to take some useful part, however small, consists in fostering the right atmosphere in which the composer of genius, when he comes, may flourish. For, as Mr. Ernest Newman has recently pointed out, the composer cannot possibly undertake the double labour of making his bricks and building his house. The material must be to his hand, and it must not be merely raw material. We can see in the short-lived ebullition of Russian national music during the nineteenth century the danger of trying to build without foundations or even plans. There were two men of undoubted genius among these Russians, Moussorgsky and Borodin. Yet their works are crude and shapeless, and take their place in the world's musical literature only by reason of the extraordinary power of individual scenes. It was not merely that these men were amateurs—Rimsky-Korsakov was learning his theory with his own pupils after his appointment to a professorship at the Petrograd Conservatoire—they had no tradition behind them which would guide them in the structure of their works. Russian culture was in its infancy and mainly of foreign origin. But the Nationalists, very rightly, revolted against alien influence and, partly because they were incapable of such complicated musical thought, wrongly despised the German symphonic form as mere mathematics. The result was that they produced music which was repetitive and formless. They had to hand any amount of valuable raw material in the form of folk-tunes, which they strung together anyhow. When inspiration failed, they repeated the tune in another

key or on a different instrument, and they substituted brilliant external decoration for a sound core. Their music appealed to us at first by reason of its novelty and its barbaric splendour, but how tired we became of it, once the unfamiliarity wore off! Theirs is the mistake into which so many modern painters have fallen, who lay on colour in default of form. As M. Rolland says: "Les musiciens qui font la peinture prennent la lettre pour l'esprit et le matériel des sons pour leur âme cachée."

This warning is necessary, because there has been an easy assumption that we, too, who are rich in folk-song, may make of this raw material a national school of opera. But the danger is not so great as it was, nor was it ever so imminent here as in Russia, because we have behind us centuries of culture and a great tradition of music, though it was lost for two hundred years and its threads are only now being picked up. It is recognised that a folk-song is one thing and that an extended musical composition, whether it be a symphony or an opera, is another, and that you cannot create the latter by stringing a number of the former together. A composer like Vaughan Williams is not likely to fall into such an error, and he has shown how folk-song may be used as the basis of what we must call art-music. If we need confirmation for this reading of the signs, we may turn to Spain, also the possessor of a fine old culture, where da Falla is doing for his native music after his own fashion what Vaughan Williams is doing for England.

But we must go back a little and see how the "preparation" in England has taken place and how far it has got. The chief credit for the revival of an English School of music, as opposed to a school imitating foreign models, must be given to Stanford. Others, like Parry, Mackenzie and, in a rather different way, Elgar have played a part in it. The last-named, though unlikely to have any direct influence on the future development of our music, has spoken as an Englishman of his period and, what is most important, gave us a good conceit of ourselves among the nations at a time when it was thought to be quite impossible that any of our race should be able to hold his own beside the composers of Germany. The influence of the others, especially of Stanford, has been more direct. Stanford, who trained most of our living composers, has made possible, by both his precept and his practice, a return to the really English style of declamation which had been lost to sight since the death of Purcell. Unhappily he was not endowed with the "sense of the theatre," which is essential for success in opera, or the creation of a vital school of British opera might not have been so long delayed. He was too concerned with niceties of workmanship, which do not "come off" in the theatre and often actually get in the way, and he was blind to

some of the primary laws of dramatic art. For instance, in *Shamus O'Brien* he cheats the audience into believing that the Banshee has called Shamus away, when in reality it is nothing but a practical joke played upon him by one of the characters. That is neither fair-play nor good drama. His songs, however, are a permanent addition to the treasury of English music, and he had done for serious vocal music the same service that Sullivan performed for the English comic opera, that of re-creating an intelligible and truly English style of singing. Unhappily the example of Sullivan has not been successfully followed up, and we seem to have lost what might have been a germinating force in our national opera. We have already noticed that it was from the *Singspiel*, a corresponding form, that opera developed in Germany through Mozart and Weber to Wagner.

The proper atmosphere for the production of national music in this country already exists and we are beginning to see the results. But there is still something wanting for the creation of the particular form of music called opera. What is needed is a revision of our attitude towards this form. The average Englishman still holds in his heart of hearts to the witty definition given by his demi-god, Dr. Samuel Johnson. There is this much to be said in the lexicographer's favour: he was merely defining what he knew, the contemporary Italian opera which was (and still is) exotic to an Englishman and certainly had little connection with the rational faculties or even with common sense. And if there still seems something absurd in certain operatic conventions, that is partly because they are exotic and not a product of our national way of looking at things, and partly, perhaps mainly, because most people are naturally inclined to approach opera through the story alone. They are apt to find this deficient in interest, because it is in the nature of opera that the story shall be bare and simple, since the vivification and enrichment of it is the business of the music, and any elaboration of detail in the story merely gets in the way of musical expression or is lost beneath it and therefore worthless. *Der Rosenkavalier* provides familiar examples of this fault, and the reader may be referred in this connection to the admirable *dictum* of Vecchi quoted earlier in this essay. It is as great a mistake to approach an opera merely through the music, like the lady who justified taking her daughter* to *Der Rosenkavalier* by saying "Of course the story is dreadfully improper, but one must just listen to the delightful music." For in that way much of the music's significance will be lost.

But this is not to say that the libretto of an opera need not be intelligible drama. It must, within the limits set by its purpose as

* This was, of course, in pre-war days.

an opera-book,* conform to the ordinary laws of dramatic art, just as the music, though freed from the stricter rules which are necessary in absolute music owing to the elucidation by the dramatic action of things which would otherwise be unintelligible, must obey the laws of musical construction.

For its proper appreciation, therefore, an opera must be taken as a complete entity. It may appear to be divisible superficially into two elements, the words and the music; but on the hypothesis of its being a great opera, these two elements will be so blended together as to form, in the language of chemistry, not a mere mixture in which neither ingredient loses its identity, but a compound in which the two produce in complete fusion a new substance with an individual character of its own. The drama finds its expression in music and the music becomes drama, since it expresses in its own way the conflict of the personalities or of the ideas in the play. Anything in the drama which remains untransmuted, that is to say which does not become different from what it would be in an ordinary stage-play, is an excrescence upon opera. If the music remains just music and does not carry on the dramatic action, it is, however beautiful, irrelevant. M. Rolland describes the composer's duty admirably when he says, "Le musicien doit toujours transposer en émotions les actions et les faits qui s'adressent aux autres sens."†

This definition is an ideal one, to which we shall find that many delightful works do not conform. But the accepted masterpieces of this musical form do approach very nearly to this ideal and are subject to criticism in so far as they fall short of it. It is certainly possible to take large sections of Wagner's operas and play them as orchestral pieces to the delight of audiences who know nothing of their dramatic context. For Wagner had a marvellous sense of symphonic structure which enables these excerpts to stand on their own basis as music, although even here we are often conscious of a vague dissatisfaction with the form, which is naturally not complete in most instances. But it is a commonplace of musical experience that these passages gain enormously in significance when they are heard in their context and in conjunction with the dramatic action, and they probably give most pleasure, when they do not irritate by their incompleteness, to those who know the operas and can take these parts as reminders of the whole.

The oil-and-vinegar theory of opera may therefore be discarded, and

* The adaptation of dramatic technique to opera is not wholly in the nature of a restriction; for the dramatist can make use of scenes, such as the consecration of Radames and his triumphal entry into Memphis in *Aida*, or the supernatural scenes so frequent in early English opera, which would be impossible in spoken drama unless incidental music were provided.

† *L'histoire de l'Opéra avant Lulli et Scarlatti*, by Romain Rolland, p. 15.

the critics who quote inferior works in its favour can be answered that in those works the composers have failed to produce good operas. Saint-Evremond, like Dr. Johnson, may be excused for writing in a letter to the Duke of Buckingham that "l'opéra est un travail bizarre de poésie et de musique, où le poète et le musicien, également gênés l'un par l'autre, se donnent beaucoup de la peine à faire un méchant ouvrage," not merely because we can readily condone such a witty statement of the case, but because it was not unfair to the opera of seventeenth-century Paris. Since those days Gluck, Mozart, Wagner and Verdi have shown that reason is not incompatible with opera and have fulfilled, though in ways undreamt of by Caccini and Monteverdi, the ideals of its original creators.

V

If we accept opera as a distinctive art-form, as different from symphonic music as sculpture is from painting, we shall have gone a long way towards its proper appreciation and, therefore, towards creating the right atmosphere in which it can exist. Such aids as State-subsvention or the even more desirable creation of a trust-fund to assist it—for Englishmen mistrust, not without some reason, the meddling of Governments in the affairs of Art—are, for all their usefulness, subsidiary to this prime necessity. Financial assistance is certainly required by opera far more than by other forms of music or drama, on account of the inherent difficulties and expenses of its production. At present we are moving in a vicious circle, wherein lack of rehearsal is followed too often by poor performance and consequent failure, with the result that audiences are inclined to assume that opera itself is a bad form of art. If the financial difficulty can be removed, there will be a greater chance for singers to study their parts with thoroughness and to form a distinctive style of English operatic performance, which will supplant the imitation of foreign models which still persists owing to the lack of such opportunities.

The outlook at the moment is, especially in the region of finance, far from hopeful. But in the light of what has been achieved in the face of seemingly insuperable difficulties, there is no need for despair. A number of works have been produced in recent years, by Hôlst, Gatty, Vaughan Williams and others, which are quite free from any charge of imitating foreign models and in some cases are distinctively English. The greatest of these works and the one which holds the most promise of future developments is *Hugh the Drover*. The music of Vaughan Williams is not superficially dramatic and it was a surprise to find how effectively he had adapted his style to the theatre. His *Pastoral Symphony* fulfills the description given by Roger North of

the English music of a preceding age. "The old English Fantasies," he says, "were in imitation of an older Italian sort of sonata, but fell from the sprightliness and variety they had, even in those times, into a perpetual grave course of fugue, and if the fugue quickened into a little division, or an air of triple was pricked in, it was extraordinary. For this reason the old English music passed for dull entertainment, and I must agree it is so to impatient hearers, but I was ever pleased with it. . . . and chiefly for the facility and sedateness of the music. It is not like a hurry of action, as looking on a battle, where the concern for one side or the other makes a pleasure, but like sitting in a pleasant cool air in a temperate summer evening, when one may think or look or not, and still be pleased."

This quiet mood persists in much of *Hugh the Drover*, which, to quote our seventeenth century amateur again, may "seem a strange sort of music, being an interwoven hum-drum, compared with the brisk battuta derived from the French and Italian"—or, we may add, with the severe and logical formality of the German. Vaughan Williams is, indeed, far more English in his manner of expression, if not in his outlook, than either Elgar or Debuss. In his music is reborn the grave spirit of the English Fantasy; it is reborn a living thing, not exhumed from its coffin and decked out with appropriate garments hired from a firm in Wardour Street. Else it could never give to many of us a pleasure comparable in intensity with that which Samuel Pepys had from the incidental music to *The Virgin Martyr*, which was "so sweet that it ravished me, and, indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife; that. . . . I was not able to think of anything, but remained all night transported, so as I could not believe that ever any musick hath that real command over the soul of a man as did this upon me."

Yet this gives us pause. For who would be stirred to-day by the "wind-musique" written for this forgotten play by Decker and Massinger? Will *Hugh the Drover*, which has so transported us, be as completely forgotten except in the chance reference of an enthusiastic diarist? Perhaps Vaughan Williams may really take the modest place which he ascribed to himself recently in a speech at Birmingham. He referred to the great number of musicians who prepared the ground for J. S. Bach and suggested that we are passing through a similar period of preparation, that the English composers of to-day are but the forerunners of a genius who will appear half a century hence. That will affect few of us, and we prefer to believe otherwise when we have listened to Vaughan Williams's music as one may sit in the pleasant cool air of a temperate summer evening.

DYNELLY HUSSEY.

LEONARD BORWICK

SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS*

You can generally make a good guess at the character of a public performer from the way in which he comes on to the platform. I do not mean merely from his walk, but from his whole demeanour in those trying moments when he is waiting to begin. At such times his mind is (or should be) so preoccupied with the thought of the wrath to come that he forgets all about himself, and his nature peeps out unawares. I knew a foreign singer who proved this from the other point of view. He would spring to attention outside the curtain, swell out his chest and walk down the stage like a wooden soldier with his head slowly revolving from side to side and his eyes raking each row in turn. Borwick walked shyly on to the platform, bowed shyly to the audience, sat down at the piano and plunged at once into a profound reverie. He would hold his hands close to his breast, like bosom friends, and clasp and unclasp them, and gaze at the keyboard the while. I always felt that he and those affectionate conspirators were elaborating some beautiful plot together in which we were presently to take part. He would sit thus, apparently unconscious of his audience, until the moment of sudden hush which told him they were tuned to him. Then he would suddenly turn and look at them with a delightful half-smile, take instant possession of them with his eyes and suddenly begin to play.

I emphasise the suddenness of these final movements because they were so patently unpremeditated and unconscious. I knew them and their meaning, and I knew that smile—part surprise at finding the audience there at all, part sympathy with them in their affliction and part reassurance that it would not be so bad after all—ever since we were little more than boys together just starting out in life. They were all there the first time I met him—at a party at the late Mr. Arthur Chappell's house in Harley Street, at which I was making one of my earliest appearances, and at which this young English pianist, home "on leave" from Frau Schumann at Frankfurt, "wiped the floor" with us all. I did not know much about the pianoforte at that time, but I recognised his genius at once. Nor did I guess how closely we were later to be associated, but we started a friendship then and there which lasted unbroken till he died. And yet it is the little things of that afternoon that I remember best—the bewildered way he walked to the piano, his communion with his friends, and the comical half-smile with which he invited us to join the company.

* An article by Leonard Borwick appeared in *MUSIC AND LETTERS*, January, 1925.

We had many things to bring us together. We had both been trained in Germany and knew the life and the language intimately; his brother and I had been old schoolfellows together at Clifton; we had the same impulse to break away from irksome tradition which surges up in every generation, and we felt that there was some fresh country to explore if only we could find it. But it was not till 1893 that we discovered it. I was in America in the spring of that year and I remember writing home to him to say that I had a brilliant idea (for once in a way) in my head, but that it was much too exciting to write about and must therefore keep till I got home; meanwhile he was not to fill up the coming winter with tours in Iceland and Morocco. In spite of furious protests on his part, I stuck to my guns and found him ready for anything when I got back; and when I told him that the brilliant idea was that he and I should give a song and pianoforte recital in London, and, if it proved successful, give others all over the provinces, he took fire at once. Such a thing was unheard of at the time. The usual form of musical entertainment was the miscellaneous concert and the mixed company that went on tour. We were the pioneers of the new movement. I sometimes shudder now when I look at the list of recitals and recital-givers in the London concert season and think that we fathered them. But I console myself with the thought that there are many unhappy ends to choose from, and that, even if we had not given them the lead, they would have found some other one for themselves—which is not quite as barbarous a sentiment as it sounds.

We gave our first recital in St. James's Hall in December, 1893, and followed it up with a tour all over the country. We carried them on for ten years, and during that time we never repeated either a piece of pianoforte music or a song in London. We gave them up at last because either one or other of us was being continually called off to the Continent or to America, and we did not care to do them unless we could do them with our whole hearts. It was all new to us, and for the first couple of years he not only played his own programme, but accompanied me as well. This turned out to be too exhausting, so we got Samuel Liddle to join us, and then the happy band was complete. We had made three rules at the start to guide us through life:—

- (1) We would always keep the flag flying, musically.
- (2) We would eschew prima-donna-ism, picture-papers and "publicity" generally.
- (3) We would never take any care of either our hands or our voices.



Leonard Borwick

Part of the latter rule was, no doubt, superfluous in either case, but, anyhow, my pianoforte-playing was not a bit worse than the jumble of groans and growls which represented Borwick's attempts at singing.

This rule (3) stood him in good stead, as I know from experience. We were together at a Hallé concert immediately after the war. He played superbly, the delicacy of his finger-work being especially beautiful. He had worked in a power-house for months at a time during the war, and I asked him how on earth his hands had got into form again so soon. He laughed and referred me to Rule 3. He had never taken the smallest care of them, and when the call came they were ready for it. They were, as we know, his bosom-friends. He had a house in Sussex just under the South Downs, and his brother told me that they spent weeks together laying flag-pavements of heavy stones, and building dry walls, and stuffing rock-plants into the cracks until their hands were raw and bleeding, and in the evening he would play divinely. I commend Rule 3 to the budding pianist and the banting prima-donna of the rising generation.

Unfortunately, this splendid sanity did not wholly pervade him in his early days. Like many other young people, he was convinced that the world was all wrong, especially in matters of health and food, and we had many amusing (and anxious) times with him when we were on tour. Liddle reminded me of one. He and I were sitting in the train at Derby Station waiting for Borwick. Just as we were moving out, he tore open the door, leapt in, threw his hat on to the seat beside me, flung himself back and said:

"I've come to the conclusion that what's the matter with us all is that we eat too much salt."

I had not been aware that there was anything particularly the matter with us, but I left the argument to Liddle—I had my eye on the hat. He had come back from Germany a fanatical devotee of a certain type of "health" clothing. So long as he confined this to the lower strata we did not mind, but we drew the line at a hygienic sombrero, and he spent his life guarding it like a tigress. I worked my hand slowly on to it, suddenly seized it, and made a dash for the window; but before I could get it out he leaped at me, and grabbed me round the waist with a Rugby tackle worthy of his brother Frank, and in a moment we were in a deadly *mêlée* on the floor, with Liddle standing on the cushions in the corner, cheering; and then we suddenly became aware that we were backing again into Derby Station, and that a crowd of porters were running beside the carriage and standing on the footboard collecting evidence for the coroner.

He beat me on that occasion, but I beat him (providentially) on

another. His views on salt were the early symptoms of a passion for food reform. This developed slowly downwards till he reached the stage when he insisted that the only proper food for human beings was a diet of grapes and nuts. To a man who was working mentally and physically night after night under conditions of great nervous strain this was a very serious matter, and it was painful to see him growing thinner and weakening day by day of the tour. I was deeply concerned, not only for my colleague but for my friend, and I determined to stop it. Argument I knew was useless, so I resorted to cunning. I went to the head waiter of the hotel (we were in a big southern town) and explained the situation to him. He was a sportsman and a German (both essential to the plot), and he played his part magnificently. I knew to the moment when we should turn up for supper, and I gave him certain instructions, which he carried out to the letter. We came in at the exact time agreed upon, and sat down at a table with shaded candles on it, and just in front of a roaring fire. Borwick looked weakly for the grapes and nuts, but there was no sign of them. Instead he saw a number of familiar little dishes—Mirabellen, prunes, cranberries, Apfelmus and Kartoffelsalat—and in an instant he was back again in Frankfurt; and while he stared at the old familiar friends in a happy stupor, half a grouse (out of the picture, but irresistible) appeared in front of him, and at the same moment he heard a "pop" on his right and the fizz of champagne at his elbow, and after one moment of titanic struggle he fell—and that was the end of food reform.

He was full of "cussednesses" of all sorts, and Liddle and I became expert in circumventing them. If we asked him to play Bach for an encore, he would play Chopin; so we used to ask for Chopin and then we got Bach, and *vice versa*. He turned up after one summer holiday with a beard and a fierce challenge in his eye. I just had presence of mind enough to say what a success it was and how I hoped he would stick to it, and it disappeared next day. No one would have enjoyed the joke on himself more than he, if we had been foolish enough to give it away. He had that blessed gift of God—the power to laugh till he cried.

It would be hard to imagine three people working together on finer terms of affection and respect. When Liddle and I had finished our particular group we did not smoke cigarettes in the green-room till we were due to go on again. We sat on the steps of the platform and listened to every note he played. And he worked for my work as though it had been his own. Possibly somebody may remember his spectacular entrance on to the platform at St. James's Hall on January 11, 1895. He went on (in defiance of custom) in front of the singer, tripped, apparently, on the top step, and fell on to his

face. We were bringing out the "Dichterliebe" for the first time in London on that occasion. It had never been given before in its entirety. In order that it should be the very best that we could make it he had memorised the pianoforte part. Memorising "accompaniments" is, as every pianist knows, a very different thing from solo work, and Borwick was half-paralysed with fright. At the very last moment, when the curtain was drawn back, he turned round to me as white as a sheet and gasped out, "I can't do it. I'll forget." I was just as frightened as he, and in a convulsive movement of panic I took him by the back of the neck and hurled him headlong on to the platform. In all those 16 songs he only made one small slip, and I was probably the only person in the room who was aware of it.

I have loved the pianoforte and its literature all my musical life, and what I know about them I owe primarily to him. I happen, too, to have been thrown continually with famous pianists and have had plenty of opportunity to study them, and, in my opinion, in some respects Borwick was the greatest of them all. He had the most beautiful touch I ever heard, and a sense of colours and a power to paint them in tone which was little short of magical. His Leonardo Leo differed in texture from his Bach as the clavichord from the harpsichord. His Schumann, in its quality of actual sound, throbbed with romance. And who has ever given us the deeps of water as his left hand gave them to us in the "Ondine" from Ravel's "Gaspard de la Nuit"? He was admittedly the greatest Schumann player there has ever been, and one of the greatest players of Mozart and Beethoven and Brahms—and yet the two things which stand out vividly in my memory, with which I shall always associate him, are that same "Gaspard de la Nuit" suite and the Chopin Prelude in D minor; and the Chopin Prelude brings me to the question which we must all have asked ourselves so often: Why was not Borwick one of the great "star" pianists of the world? (The dreadful word seems almost disloyal to Rule 2 and him, but it is the only one that fits.)

He had the ball at his feet from the start. When he was little more than a boy he played the Brahms Concerto at Vienna under Richter. Brahms wrote to Frau Schumann (keeping supper waiting in his excitement to do it) that "her pupil's playing had contained all the fire and passion and technical ability the composer had hoped for in his most sanguine moments." Joachim swore by him. He said openly to everyone that he would rather play with Borwick than with anybody. His intimate association with the great "classical" group should have made his name stand out all over the world, especially as he was one of the few people England has ever had in music who was of the true "Continental" calibre.

And yet he once was very near it. It was in 1912 (I think). He had

just come back from a tour in Australia and America, where he had made a phenomenal success, and he was giving a Recital at the Æolian Hall. I can feel now the shivers that ran up and down my spine as I became conscious of some subtle change which had come over him—the something for which I had always hoped. But it was the Chopin Prelude in D minor which made it unmistakable. It swept the audience off his feet and him with it. For the first time I saw him carried away with the sheer fierce delight of swaying that audience as he would—a human, tempestuous passion which he had discovered in the great spaces of the outer world. I implored him then and there never to let it go, to strike while the iron was hot, and to make the grand tour quickly again while the mood was on him, and he promised he would. But then the war came, and then it was too late.

The truth was, I am sure, that music was almost enough to him in itself. He loved it so deeply for its own sake that, unlike the rest of us, he did not depend upon the stimulus of an audience to send the primitive emotions surging through his being. I honestly believe that he sometimes forgot the audience altogether. He was playing once at South Place and was finishing some very quiet piece. It ended on an arpeggio *pp*, with the left hand on the key-note in the treble, and by some slip he played the semi-tone below. He leapt to life—it was exactly as though he had been violently shaken out of a beautiful dream—gave a look of concentrated fury at the piano and pounded out the right note *fortissimo* a dozen times. There was a roar of laughter from the audience, and he suddenly woke up. I shall never forget the heavenly smile that came over his face as he came to and saw the joke of it. It was the only time in his life when—quite unconsciously—he transgressed Rule 2.

Beauty was all in all to him—touch, colour, form. In that reverie at the piano he communed with beauty and saw visions; and when he asked us in, it was to see those visions with him, not to hear him play. He loved precious things as he hated a prig. He loved the South Downs and the open air. He was a fine athlete, walker, swimmer and tennis-player, and far above the average at billiards and chess, and was a regular *habitué* at Lord's. The very belligerent obstinacies in which we took such delight seemed to belong to the prize-ring. You could not knock him out and you could not wear him down. He stuck to his ideals and no one could move him an inch.

A friend of mine, who heard him for the first time a couple of years ago, sent me an account of his playing so far-seeing and so beautifully expressed that I got leave to send the letter to him. Here is what he said in reply:

"That was a wonderful message you sent me from the mountains!"

* I was in Vancouver at the time.

"It is so romantic, and yet so real—for I do recognise myself, if I dare say so, in A's account, as I hardly ever do in English criticism, however favourable!

"To read it is like playing the concert all over again with the consciousness of some deeper *rapport* with the audience—though I could not have allowed myself to imagine a better audience than I had then. But now I can think of one all composed of A's. . . . I needn't say I received it as something sacred—from no place or time or person—just the unimaginable gift of grace that comes sometimes from beyond one's ken."

For I need not say I
receive ^{it} as something
sacred - from no place or
time or person - just
the unimaginable gift
of grace that comes sometimes
from beyond one's ken
& that one can only hope
to deserve.

Would that audience of his imagination, if he could have found it, have fired him to conquer the world? Or would, as A wrote to me after his death, "his reverence and quiet simplicity and remoteness from the scrum of publicity" (so true and beautiful, and yet so sad) have kept him in that reverie at the piano, clasping and unclasping his hands and communing with beauty in his dreams?

HARRY PLUNKET GREENE.

THE FUTURE OF THE BALLET

THE posthumous study by the late Cecil J. Sharp, which has been prepared for publication by Mr. A. P. Oppé, under the title "The Dance, An Historical Survey of Dancing in Europe" (Halton and Truscott Smith, 30s. net), and adorned with 75 skilfully chosen plates, is a work of singular importance to students of its subject. Books have been written on this topic by scholars who could not dance, and by dancing masters whose scholarship was to seek. Here we have the labours of a scholar who had led a great practical revival of dancing in this country. Possibly his efforts on behalf of the Morris and other English folk-dances gave Sharp a certain prejudice in favour of that style above all others, but it did not obscure his perceptions or his essential fairness of judgment. The value of his text is out of proportion to its brevity. It is really the start in England of scientific dance-history.

"Originally," says Sharp at the opening of his essay, "the dance was an instinctive, spontaneous, communal utterance, due to the desire on the part of a tribe or community to give concrete expression to spiritual conceptions, aspirations and ideals, felt and held in common." Rather than "conceptions" one would have thought that it was "emotions" that primitive man sought to express and to relieve by rhythmic bodily motion. But since there could be no relief or satisfaction to the lover, the warrior or the worshipper except in free and well-adjusted movements of his frame, dancing was bound to become the cultivation of strength, agility and harmony—qualities which alone make dancing a pleasure to the dancer. But in proportion as this was realised dancing became agreeable to watch as well as to do, for the sight of fine and pleasurable movement is by sympathetic suggestion exhilarating and tranquillising to the spectator.

It is well to begin, thus, by rubbing together one or two dry sticks of theory, for they soon kindle the spark of one of the liveliest controversies about the dancer's art. Should dancing be "natural," and if we say so, what do we mean by "nature"? "Natural" has been a tricky word in ethics, law and politics. An illustration of the elusive way in which it has been used by dancing theorists and critics lies to hand. It was common when the new Russian Ballet was revolutionising traditional ideas to blame what M. Fokine, the pioneer of the innovating school, called "the conventions of the older ballet . . . with its artificial form of dancing on the point of the toe,

with the feet turned out, dressed in short bodices, with the figure tightly laced in stays and with a strictly established system of steps, gestures and attitudes." Here, it is evident, the old-fashioned ballet technique of the Milanese schools is regarded as opposed to nature. Yet the new ballet under the inspiration of Nijinsky proceeded to such works as "*L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*," with its attempt to adapt the rigid postures of archaic sculpture, and "*Le Sacre du Printemps*" with its strange conventions of gesture and movement derived from post-impressionist painting. Whether they be judged beautiful or ugly, an advance on the old ballet or a declension from it, it is hard to look on them as in any sense a return to "nature."

Let us approach the question from another angle. Children at the sound of music or under the spell of sunshine are apt to dance. Impulse guides them to some sort of rhythm, and suppleness of limb, poise and sureness of movement may be a gift of birth. That may truly be called "natural" dancing, but is it the ideal? Should we ask no more of the grown-up dancer than surrender to impulse and say that where art begins nature ends and artificiality threatens? But if we turn to other bodily accomplishments, such as rowing, riding, skating, we evidently do not take the untrained, undiscriminated actions of the beginner as aim and end. From the many possible ways of performing the necessary movements and muscular adjustments we require that the most efficient and harmonious be selected by toilsome practice. And shall we then call the best horseman or oarsman "conventional" and the blundering beginner "natural"? That seems an affront to human dignity; we prefer to think that we are "natural" when we have reached the fullest development of which we are capable. If then there is such a thing as natural dancing, and this is what ought to be striven for, it is likely to involve hard and elaborate technique. To what models must we go to learn it?

Let us first remark that, whoever may have fallen into the fallacy that perfection of dancing depended on "simplicity and instinct," Sharp, who had not only watched and read about dancing, but practised and made it, was not to be trapped.

It is commonly assumed [he writes] that the folk-dance, being the invention of primitive, unlettered, country people, is necessarily of a very simple, embryonic type; and that peasant dancers are crude, uncouth, heavy-footed performers, making up for their lack of technique by an unrestrained exuberance; in this way, indeed, they have always been represented in pictures. But this is by no means in accordance with fact, as those who, like

the writer, have been in close touch with genuine traditional dancers, are in a position to testify. . . . The expert drawing-room dancer would be hard put to it to memorise a Morris or Sword Dance, or to execute either with the dexterity, the force, and at the same time, with the restraint of the best folk-dancers; or, again, to acquire the technique of that easy, swaying movement of the body, akin to that of the skater, which is the peculiar accomplishment of all folk-dancers.

To turn from the traditional ballet to folk-dancing with some vague idea of returning to the founts of nature would plainly then not be a move from the complex to the simple, but from one virtuosity (we might almost say) to another. It is the course recommended at the end of his survey by Sharp. Rejecting the Milanese technique as a development that has drowned beauty in gymnastics (though he was far too practical a dancer to deny it any merit with the sweeping crudeness of some critics), Sharp complains that the new Russian school, so far as he was able to follow their course in his lifetime provided no satisfying substitute. "M. Fokine and his coadjutors were themselves trained in the technique, and saturated with the conventions, of the very type of dance that they essayed drastically to reform; and this, it seems has proved a heavier handicap than they were able to carry." Sharp therefore suggests turning in a different direction:—

I am therefore of opinion—though I express it with some diffidence—that the better way to bring about the reform, and perhaps the line of least resistance is not to attempt an amendment of the existing ballet but to revert to first principles, to start afresh and endeavour to create a ballet founded upon one or other of our national folk-dance techniques. Many of the European nations could provide it. The technique of the English folk-dance, for example, is very full; it comprises a large number of different steps, arm and hand-movements and gestures and is especially rich in concerted figure evolutions, a form of expression in the dance of which the ballet has hitherto made but little use. Here, surely, is sufficient material from which to develop a spectacular dance for the theatre which shall consist wholly of movements at once natural and expressive, and possessing the advantage for England that they are cast in the dance-idiom of our own country.

Before examining the value of this suggestion, let us enquire what is this traditional ballet technique which is voted unsatisfactory both by

M. Fokine and Cecil Sharp; what are its principles and how was it evolved? The materials for a historical sketch are to be found in Sharp's essay, and they can be supplemented by Gaston Vuillier's large but formless treatise, translated into English under the title "A History of Dancing" (1898), by Crawford Fitch's "Modern Dancers and Dancing" (1911), and one or two other compilations of the same sort.

Sharp does not begin his history of the ballet until the Renaissance. If we follow his division of his subject into "Social" and "Spectacular" dancing, a division not entirely satisfactory, we must agree that the "Spectacular" development begins in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. For it is with the Renaissance that theatrical art in the widest sense begins to separate itself from social and civic celebrations and develop as an independent profession. The Middle Ages are full of dancing, but if we except the strolling *tombleres* and *sauters*, who were professional dancers of a rude type, just as the masked buffoons of the *commedia dell' arte* were professional actors of a rude type, dancing was either a folk-survival, often making its way into the more popular feasts and rites of the Church, or else a diversion of the nobility at their *fêtes* and banquets. As drama revived in the religious plays performed in or before churches, and in the comedies played in their houses by wealthy amateurs, so spectacular dancing grew out of the sumptuous masquerades that entertained royal and ducal courts. Splendid and fantastic enough in the Middle Ages, these vast spectacles, played in great halls or courtyards, and embracing "songs, dances, recitations, processions" with elaborate scenic devices and mechanism, became more and more sumptuous with the growing luxury of the Renaissance. Played under the auspices of "the humanists and their theatrical theories," they usually set forth some mythological tale or allegorical conceit; and we perceive that in their intricate medley the distinct elements that were to become ballet (in the modern sense) opera, poetic drama and pantomime are not yet fully discriminated. Some of these gorgeous primitive ballets have acquired historical fame, and we find mention or illustrations of them in Sharp's book. Such were Bergonzio di Botta's ballet given at the banquet held on the occasion of the marriage of the Duke of Milan to Isabella of Aragon in 1489, and the magnificent *Ballet Comique de la Reine* produced at Paris in 1581 for the nuptial celebrations of the Duc de Joyeuse and Marguerite de Lorraine, which was prepared by an Italian designer, Baltazarini, called in France Beaujoyeux. There is also in this book a striking picture of a grand Florentine ballet of the early seventeenth century on the theme of the giant Typhœus confined within Mount Ischia. This shows plainly the nature of the arrangement, the ballet being

staged in what is apparently a colossal banqueting hall, clear of tables. The spectators line the sides; the dancers occupy the floor; the dais or platform at the further end is converted into a stage with scenery, from which steps lead to the floor-space below.

We cannot here pursue the Renaissance ballet down the attractive bypath of the English Masque, but it may serve to sum up what has been said if we point to *The Tempest* as showing the mixture of genres on the Renaissance stage, for *The Tempest* is tragedy, opera, ballet, masque and fairy pantomime all in one. The point to emphasise is that the ballet is essentially an appendage of court and noble life, and that in consequence the style of dancing employed in it—if we except the deliberately grotesque or savage interludes and “antimasques” of satyrs, clowns or wild beasts—was of the stately and solemn type demanded by the dress and habits of those who took part in it. This note is stronger still in the next phase of the ballet, which is at the court of *Le Roi Soleil*. By the time of Louis XIV the magnificence of the Renaissance had ossified into a formal ceremoniousness and rigidity of etiquette. When the King himself was pleased to tread a measure in such a spectacle as “The Ballet of the Prosperity of the Arms of France” it can be imagined with what deliberate and grave pomp the affair would be conducted. The fashions of the age were heavy-skirted coats, high heels, ruffles and great perukes; stage costumes were not less ponderous. We are as far removed as can be from nature, if nature in dancing means the free and varied employment of the limbs.

The first move towards striking off these fetters was the transference of the ballet from the *salons* of the Court to the stage of professional theatres. Louis founded a Royal Academy of Dancing in 1661, and in 1669 established the Opéra by the licence granted to the Abbé Perrin and Cambert. In 1672 the musician Lulli superseded these directors and began to produce works like the *Fêtes de Bacchus et de l'Amour*, and *Le Triomphe de l'Amour*, which blended opera and ballet. In the later work, produced in 1681, women dancers made their first appearance on the professional stage. But there was still much to be changed before anything like a natural style of dancing could be achieved. As Sharp points out, the first professional ballets were still clogged by “the heavy, cumbersome dresses which ballerinas had inherited from the Court ladies. They wore high-heeled shoes, heavy skirts puffed out with panniers and reaching to the ground, towering wigs, sometimes three feet in height, decked with ribbons, flowers and plumes, and they covered their faces with masks.” From Lulli to the French Revolution the history of the ballet is the history of the breach with one after another of the traditions derived from the

pomp of Court dancing. Most of these reforms are associated with particular dancers in the hearsay that has come down to the historians, but Sharp, a more critical investigator than many of his predecessors, tends to throw doubt on these attributions. Mademoiselle Camargo, who danced from 1726 to 1741, enjoys the credit of many of these innovations. The "gliding, deliberate and stately steps" of the gavottes, minuets, *bouffées* and other Court dances no longer sufficed. It was necessary to relieve the ballet with the free and springing steps *en l'air*. Camargo wore a shorter skirt, ending above the ankle; coiled her hair more simply about her head; "discarded," says Sharp, "the high-heeled shoe in favour of the ballet-slipper"—though this is not borne out by Lancret's famous portrait of her. She is said to have invented the *entrechat* (which the English call "cross-capers"), a leaping step in which the feet are crossed and uncrossed in the air; but Sharp—it is rather a pity—explodes this most venerable of ballet myths, tracing the *entrechat* back clearly into the preceding century. (In the same way he takes from Mlle. Heinel the prize of being the first to whirl in the pirouette in 1766). Like all dancers who practise steps *en haut*, Mlle. Camargo had to devise some form of *caleçon* or "tights," and with that device we are beginning to look forwards. When, in 1772, the male dancer Gardel flung away the mask, full-bottomed wig and great copper orb with which he was expected to load himself in the character of the Sun-god Apollo in Rameau's *Castor and Pollux*, to appear in his own hair worn long and showing his face, another weight was laid aside.

But the most decisive step forward was taken when, in 1758, Jean-Georges Noverre, dancer, author and ballet-master, began the publication of his "*Lettres sur la Danse*." The first words were significant. "Poetry, painting and dancing are, or ought to be, the faithful copy of nature." Only a few years before, Rousseau's celebrated "*Discours sur l'Origine de l'Inégalité*" had startled the learned world with the paradox that men in the state of nature are equal and virtuous; society and civilisation have made them unequal and corrupt. The paradox quickly became the mode; and those who had most to fear from it were foremost in adopting it. The aristocrats, whose last taste of the simple life was a ride in farmers' carts to the guillotine, began to cultivate simplicity of dress, and a love of the country and picnics; while the Queen Marie Antoinette liked to serve as an amateur milkmaid at the Trianon. This is going ahead of Noverre, but it shows that he was ahead of the fashion. Like most dance reformers who have reverted to ideals of simplicity, he tried to divert dancers from attention to ingenious and difficult steps, and set them on the expression of the emotions, the narration of some

ancient fable by gesture and facial play. It is difficult to resist the impression, from such accounts and pictures of Noverre's ballets as have been preserved that what he called "nature" and the return to antiquity was more the *genre larmoyant* palatable to an age steeped in Rousseau's sentimentalism than a genuine return to the simplicity of classic art; but it is important to note that while Rousseau sought the return to nature in politics by upholding the classic city-state, the miniature republic, as the ideal, Noverre also dimly felt that to be natural meant somehow to be Greek, or at any rate Greco-Roman. Out of a list of twelve of his ballets given by Vuillier, ten are on classical themes, and it is to be remembered that this classicism was not merely nominal as in the days of the *Grand Monarque*; it implied a serious (if not always a successful) study of antique sources.

But greatly, and perhaps deservedly, as Noverre has been lauded in histories of dancing, it is hardly to be believed that he would have brought about the immense change between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century ballet by his writings and examples alone. A much mightier force intervened, the great Revolution itself. Politically this upheaval represented the overthrow of the feudal and medieval State by a revival of Roman Republicanism; and this could not fail to have its effect upon fashions. Hair-powder, high heels and hooped skirts disappeared, to be replaced, among the female population at any rate, by an imitation of Greek dress, the sandal, the light, flowing tunic, the scarf, the hair bound by a fillet. When the Republic gave way to the Empire this mode did not change, for the empire of Napoleon was in outward appearance the ghost of the empire of Augustus. Its architecture, decorations and furniture were all a pale copy of what can be seen in Greco-Roman sculpture. Even the helmets of the cuirassiers resemble those of Homeric warriors. The storms of the Revolution and the wars of the Empire were not a favourable time for the development of the art of the ballet, but they set the dancers free at last from all those conventions of dress or etiquette that had hampered in the past their freedom of movement.

The new conditions and their potentialities were clearly grasped by the next great dancing theorist after Noverre, the Italian, Carlo Blasis, who, becoming like all the stars of the ballet a cosmopolitan, published his textbook, "The Code of Terpsichore," in England in 1828. Blasis' treatise is illustrated with a number of quaint little cuts showing dancers in the positions he inculcates, and anyone who compares these with the prints of the eighteenth century *ballerine* will at once perceive the completeness of the transformation. The *ballerina* of Camargo's day is a lady of fashion, the *ballerina*

of Blasis' time is a classical nymph who might have stepped down from any mediocely sculptured Greek urn. The men, too, wear as a rule the simple tunic of an Olympian athlete, and not the silk stockings and buckles of Vestris, the great male dancer of the *ancien régime*. A fresh and vigorous technique could now be enforced and the essential element in it is admirably explained by Sharp:—

Ever since Beauchamps [seventeenth century] first prescribed and taught them, the technique of dancing had been based upon the five fundamental positions of the feet, on one or other of which every step in the dance had to begin and end. These positions were first described in choreographic symbols by Feuillet (1701). They are given twenty-four years later, unaltered, in words as well as in pictures drawn by himself, by Rameau (*Maître à Danser*, 1725); and again, still unchanged, by Malpied (*Traité sur l'art de la danse*, Paris, 1770 and 1780). In each of these treatises the feet were turned outward through an angle of 45 degrees. At Milan, however, under Blasis the students were required to turn them through an angle of 90 degrees, so that with heels joined the feet were in one line. . . . The extreme, lateral, sole-position of the feet, which Blasis prescribed and which has since been universally adopted by ballet-dancers, though it has an awkward appearance through the unnatural outward flexion of the hip, knee and ankle-joints. has the great virtue that it provides the dancer with a wide base-line and a stance of great stability. It thus brings within his range a large number of difficult physical movements which he could not otherwise have attempted.

These paragraphs are an excellent instance of Sharp's power of condensing a long line of historic development into a few pregnant sentences. We have here the whole basis of the nineteenth century ballet which had its centre in Milan, as the ballet of the preceding centuries had its centre in Paris. That this empire, like that of Rome, ultimately divided itself into a Western and an Eastern half, having its second centre in the Tsar's Imperial Academy whose pupils danced at Petersburg and Moscow, is unimportant from the point of view of theory. For the great ballet-masters of the Russians before the Diaghilev-Fokine Secession, men like Marius Petipa and Cecchetti, were pupils of the prevailing Italian school.

At this point the reader may wish to interject a protest. "You tell me," he will be inclined to say, "that the technique of the Milanese ballet represents a return to nature, as against artificialities, and that its general inspiration is drawn from classical models.

Forgive me, if I fail to see either trait in it. The *ballerina* in pink tights, laced-up bodice and short circular skirt, poised in a stiffened shoe on the point of her toe—a position that gives me a pain even to watch—does not strike me as natural, and no such figure have I ever met on Greek frieze or antique vase.” In reply to this let us resume our historical sketch. We have mentioned the little classic figures in Blasis’ work. They do not differ very much in appearance from the French society dancers of 1809 shown in Sharp’s 63rd Plate—for, as we have remarked, the modes of the time were Grecian. Now compare the figure of Marie Taglioni in Plate 67, showing the *ballerina* of 1831. At a first glance it will appear that the great Taglioni is very like the *ballerine* familiar to us in old days in London at the Empire and the Alhambra, and very unlike the Grecian figures of Blasis and the Napoleonic era. But if we look at the essential structure rather than the cut and fashion of the costume we shall see cause to revise our impression.

Taglioni wears sandals, not heeled shoes, and if her legs are not bare it is because the ideas of propriety that ruled in her epoch demanded that she should cover them with tights. But the tights, called *maillot*, from the name of the costumier M. Maillot who invented them, are flesh-coloured as a substitute for nature—and apparently the substitute was considered convincing enough for one of the stricter Catholic governments (that of Naples, I believe, not of the Pope as Sharp and others say) to forbid them unless they were coloured blue. Taglioni’s simple gauze skirt represents the lower part of the flowing Greek *cheiton* well enough, though it has been shortened and stiffened to stand clear of the limbs—in order that when she executes difficult steps like the *entrechat* or the *fouetté* or the *pirouette*, the results of her laborious practice may not be hidden behind clinging draperies. (After her time, with the same end always in view of showing the legs, the skirt of the *ballerina* will be made continuously shorter and stiffer until it becomes a mere gauze parasol round her waist and is indeed very ugly). Taglioni’s bodice is drawn in tighter at the waist than the Grecian girdle used to be, but the arms and neck are free as in the Blasis figures, and her head is classically crowned with a wreath. The Greek norm then, though distorted, still persists. But Taglioni, further, is standing on her *pointe*, on the extreme tip, that is, of the toe, and what are we to make of that?

Sharp, it is interesting to observe, confirms the impression received by the ordinary student of the subject that Taglioni was the first dancer to use this position, which came to count for so much in ballet technique, or that at any rate it came into use during the period of her life, for it cannot be seen in prints or portraits of an

earlier date. Blais when he speaks of *pointes* means simply standing as high as possible on the bent toe, not rising on to the extremity itself. This position, as Sharp says, "is extremely difficult to acquire and one that needs long and painful practice before it can be used without danger of dislocating the upper joints of the toes. Even then it cannot be sustained without the artificial support of square, hard-toed slippers." It is certainly hard to find any means of bringing it under the conception of natural dancing. But was it devised simply as a gymnastic *tour de force*, an achievement analogous to that of the acrobat who seeks to show not what are the natural capacities of the body but the surprising things that can be done with it by those who seek to force it beyond nature? No doubt toe-dancing has degenerated into something of the kind, but we may doubt if in the beginning it had so crude a purpose.

One of the most prized qualities in a good dancer is lightness. It may not be reasonable to desire to see the human frame made more ethereal than by nature it is, but human beings have always sighed for the fulfilment of Titania's promise to the clown :—

And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

Now this delusive vision is certainly brought nearer by the employment of *pointes*. A dancer who makes a *pirouette* or any swift turn or swing on them, creates a momentary illusion of freedom from earthiness that cannot be gained by movements on the flat of the foot. Taglioni's most celebrated role was *La Sylphide*, and by making herself a sort of feminine Ariel she responded to an instinct of her period. For the glare and bloodshed of the empire had been succeeded by the twilight and moonlit melancholy of the Romantic era. The poetry of the day revelled in ghosts, sprites and sylphs; it was ever dreaming of disembodied spirits floating above the tombstones of Gothic ruins. Dancing, like all the arts and entertainments, follows the general spirit of its time. Pagan and joyous with the Renaissance, stiffly ceremonious at the Court of Louis XIV, dainty and coquettish in the era of Lancret and Boucher, sentimental in the epoch of Rousseau and Noverre, loose and mænadic in the frenzy of the Revolution, it was bound to grow mournful and spectral in the gloom of the Gothic revival. *Giselle* is the monument of this phase, the most extraordinary story for a ballet, when one reflects on it, that could well be devised. Despair, madness and death, the spirit rising from the grave to pursue and punish the faithless lover—it might serve for a medieval *danse macabre*, but what has it to do with the twirls and skirts of the modern *ballerina*? One of the most curious of the

illustrations to M. Svétlov's sumptuous work *Le Ballet Contemporain* is that which shows Pavlova as Giselle, leaning languorously in her gauze skirts against the moss-grown churchyard crosses. We can only say that this taste for supernaturalism in the Romantic period created a demand which the ballet supplied, and that the invention of toe-dancing came pat to meet its need, by suggesting a figure that hovers over the ground rather than treads upon it.

Of the Milanese technique in its later stages it can hardly be said that it kept much affinity with classic or natural models. Indeed when Isadora Duncan began to dance in a strictly Greek dress with steps and attitudes copied from Greek sculpture (though neither she nor anyone else knows what dances the Greeks really performed) she appeared as the actual antithesis of the traditional ballet, and as such she is the heroine of M. Svétlov's book, for he is an opponent of the technique of Blasis and Petipa. It is well, however, for the lover of dancing before taking sides in that controversy to study carefully Maurice Emmanuel's *La Danse Grecque Antique*. That elaborate piece of research collects all that can be gathered from statuary, vase-painting and other classic remains to show the steps and poses of the Greek dancers, and then compares them carefully with the technique of the ballet. The conclusion to which, we think, the judicious reader will come is that, while on some points the disciples of Blasis have deteriorated from the best classic standards, on a good many matters they have refined and strengthened the methods, so far as we can guess at them, of the Greeks. It may sound fanciful, but there are among classical statuettes certain winged Victories and other figures alighting from flight that suggest to the present writer an aspiration towards *pointes*.

It is greatly to be doubted if the ideal of natural vigour and harmony that we attribute to the Greek dancers would really be promoted by a servile copying of the Parthenon frieze or some other favourite piece of sculpture. What is needed is to take from Blasis and his school what can be seen to mark a progress and to graft it on the classical stem. Much that the Italian trained *ballerina* exhibits on the stage should be relegated to the practice room, of which the use is to strengthen and supple the members. For the dance itself, those movements only should be retained that are beautiful as well as powerful or skilful. As for *pointes*, they might have their place, when needed, for the expression of ethereality. Fokine's ballet *Les Sylphides* displeased nobody, and it could not have been danced without the technique of Taglioni.

A further question remains, or rather two. Is there really a natural norm of grace in a dancer, and, if so, why should we look for it among the Greeks? The first query will be answered in the

negative by those who consider that all beauty is relative, altering as taste alters from age to age. Mention has already been made of the paradox that whereas nature was lately used as a stick with which to beat the toe-dancer, it was soon thrown away in the fascination, on the one hand, of theories derived from Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Rayonnism and other novel schools of painting, and on the other of the renewed interest in archaic and barbaric sculpture. If we consider the work of the Russian Ballet since Fokine, who (according to Svétlov) was powerfully influenced by Isadora Duncan, left it, we cannot see in the variety of strange steps and poses which it has introduced anything like a natural rhythm and grace. The great painters who by their work for the Russian Ballet greatly developed the art of scenic decoration have in fact had a deleterious effect upon dancing, because they have filled the dancer's mind with the notion that he can somehow assimilate himself to the "stylized" renderings of the human form which painters and carvers are free to adopt. When he does this he commits the abuse of taking methods from the medium to which they are appropriate and transferring them to a medium which is recalcitrant. In fact, a live dancer will never "realize" the square lines of archaic sculpture or the elongations of a Byzantine *ikon* or the whirring synthesis of a Futurist canvas. He will only appear what he is, a man making himself uncomfortable.

The human form does not change with the plastic artist's imagination of it, and that is the fixed quantity in the dancer's calculations. The root principles of his art are as unchanging as the body of man; they are true for all times and all places. The whole value of dancing rests on the conviction that the human figure is capable of beautiful motion; to elicit its capacities without straining or distorting it should be the aim of the ballet-master. Happily there are signs that the cult of the queer is coming to an end. The rapture with which the English public has watched the physical drill in the great tattoo at Wembley shows that they realise the beauty of physical culture at least in the restricted form that military training pursues. It is only a step from this to the appreciation of dancing (an art which the ancient Greek soldiers assiduously practised), and it is certain that no dancer, male or female, will enjoy a wide and lasting popularity except by satisfying our instinctive and normal love of bodily fitness, strength and grace.

And for that, whether we deliberately copy the Greeks, or simply find ourselves going parallel with them, we shall be in line with classical art. Students of sculpture have doubtless a right to grumble at the looseness of phrase that identifies "Greek" art in its many varieties with the Pheidias school. But the art that produced the Par-

thenon frieze is the art with which those who are seeking the measure and grace of human movement must always be primarily concerned, for it is the art that most faithfully expresses the majesty and harmony of the human frame. It has a share in the permanence of its model, and may claim to be normative and universal. We do not want to imitate its details, but to absorb its principles.

On this ground Sharp's conclusion that a reform of the ballet must be sought in English folk-dancing is to be rejected. English folk-dancing, like the folk-dancing of other countries, contains treasures that it would be folly to neglect. But the ballet, though it may make use of the particular, also needs the universal. It must express the beauty of human form as such, not only the qualities and distinctive marks of this or that people. The technique laboriously built up by Blasis and his successors, on the basis, often a rather buried basis, of Pheidias canons, had this quality of universality. It is capable of purgation and development, but the art of dancing can never do without it. The ballet, by renouncing it, will only fall into eccentricity, feebleness and chaos. Indeed, it is already doing so. In this, as in more important human affairs, reform without revolution is the true policy.

D. L. MURRAY.

THE ITALIAN CANTATA OF THE XVII CENTURY—I

THE opening of the seventeenth century was to witness the collapse of that mighty fabric of polyphony raised up in the course of 300 years, by the genius of successive generations of musicians.

It was in truth a magnificent art. The splendour of it has much in common with that of Gothic architecture, but it disappeared at last with a startling rapidity. It may be said of the fifteenth century polyphonic art, that the literary text did not matter a pin. It was music pure and simple. On a theme of three bars long, taken from some popular song, the composer would raise his cathedral of sound, his Mass, or would chisel out the delicate goldsmith's work of his motet. The art was vague and generalised; even in the chansons, the frottole, the "Cante carnascialesche," it was very rare that there was any effort to suit the music exactly to the text, for the composer only aimed at interpreting the general idea of the poem, he did not refine upon the details. Not till the sixteenth century did a new ambition show itself, in the madrigal; and it was through this, that the madrigal, which was the last expression of the polyphonic genius, caused, to a great extent, the downfall of the whole marvellous system of architecture expressed in sound.

Cypriano di Rore and his fellow workers are rightly hailed by Monteverde as the initiators, and so to speak the prophets of the new style of monody. One can see that these practical contrapuntists are constantly occupied with the exact interpretation of the poetic text, though, above all, they are trying to release the melodic line from the tangle of four or five voices. But still the music of the Renaissance madrigal crushes the literary text with its sovereign might, even while it makes the literary text its starting point. It is only towards the end of the sixteenth century that there is a new adjustment between the poetic and the musical element—this can chiefly be noted in France, in the experiments of Baif and his musical colleagues of the Académie du Palais. The ideal union of music and verse is achieved in the *musique mesurée* of Claude Le Jeune, Mauduit, and Du Courroy. In Italy, in the madrigals of Luca Marenzio, Monteverde, and Gesualdo, it is seen that, in spite of the increasing importance of the literary and dramatic side, the poetry still remains the handmaid of the music.

The Florentine revolution suddenly reversed the rôles, and music had now to be its very humble servant convicted at last of destroying the poetry. In the "Euridices" of Jacopo Peri, and of Caccini; in "La Representazione di amima e di corpo" of Emilio del Cavaliere, or the "Carro di Fedeltà d'amore" of Quagliati, the music is deliberately made the slave of the text. It is not without a feeling of astonishment, that one realises the victory of the recitative style over the arts of polyphony, and of madrigal, of which it was so much the inferior. It is hard to understand how this invention of humanists, of singers, lute players, amateurs, could have had the upper hand of an art so varied, so rich, so powerful, so many coloured—an art, brought to a state of greater and greater perfection by so many musicians of genius, and still possessing such illustrious champions. That, however, is the fact. Polyphony could not now be recast. All its resources having already been discovered and exploited it must give place to a new art. At the moment, the Florentines believed themselves to have carried off a decisive victory.

All Italy followed the example of the Medici court. Each Mæcenas, charmed with the new formula which allowed him to reconcile his love of music with his passion for the theatre, vied with his fellow to order operas in the recitative style from his musicians. But music was not to wait long for her revenge. The allegiance to the new constellation of such illustrious madrigalists as Monteverde, Marco da Gagliano, or, a little later, Domenico Mazzochi, was to bring about an important change in the spirit, and above all in the technique of monodic music. Once more, it was the victors who were vanquished. Twenty years after the appearance of the *stilo recitativo* and of melodrama, music came into her own again, and poetry was again the faithful servant, though she knew that at any moment she might have a box on the ear. It was the cantata, a note written as it were on the margin of opera, which enabled music to recover from the blow struck at it by the Florentines, to become once more conscious of its own power, to realise the resources (hitherto unknown) of the monodic style, to practice new forms, and to become familiar with the *système tonal* which had crept in, to take the place of the ancient modes. Although its history is sometimes mixed up with the general history of monody, the cantata can be separately studied, from the moment when it appears in characteristic form. Its origin is very obscure. The word "cantata" had no very definite meaning, any more than the word "sonata." Each stood for concerted music, vocal or instrumental, and they were not used in a precise sense. Thus with Grandi, as with most of his contemporaries, there is no very marked difference between those pieces entitled cantata or cantada, and others called aria or madrigal. They always consist of an air of several different

strains sung to the same bass, and they are of the most varied character, often very pathetic, often on the contrary, light and lively. They have a very definite melodic form, and not much of the recitative about them.

We note by the way, that the desire of giving definite musical expression to the words (so apparent in the madrigal and afterwards in the recitative style) grows less and less in the cantata and the canzone. Once more, it is the general spirit of the poem, not the details, that the musicians trouble about. At the time that the term cantata first makes its appearance, there are innumerable names for the lyric forms (Capricci, Fugilezzi, Scherzi, Musiche, Affetti), which fall under three principal heads:—"La Madrigale Monodique," "L'air," and the "Chanson à refrain." The madrigal is composed to a poem. Detached verses form a whole, a "monolith" without repetitions or separate stanzas. Though at the opening of the century, the form is very much that of recitative, difficult vocalisation gives the interpreter of the music the chance of showing off his talent. The model in this kind is Caccini's "Amarilli mia bella." It is really an arioso in which the melody tends to come to the front, while at the same time there is the most scrupulous respect for prosody and diction.

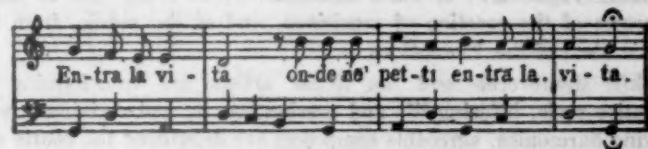
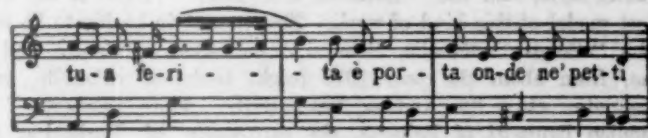
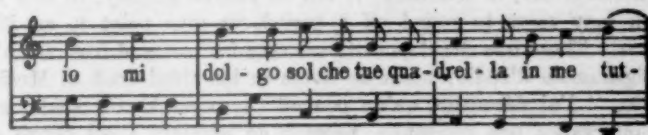
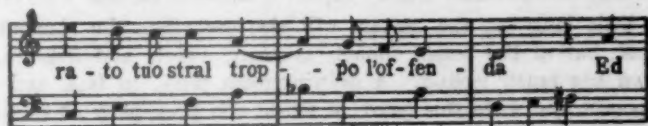
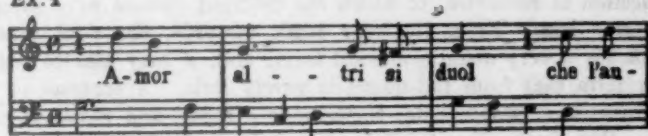
Certain composers rebel against the use of the recitative style, with these, the *madrigale monodique* denotes as it were a craving to demonstrate the possibility of composing very melodious pieces for the voice alone, keeping all the while to the great madrigalesque tradition. The celebrated organist and choirmaster, Luzzasco Luzzachi (who was, moreover in constant communication with la Camerata Bardi) composes madrigals for solo voice, with polyphonic accompaniment on the organ, which present a striking contrast to the recitative airs of the same period.

In the madrigal "O Primavera," one can see changes of rhythm, and variations, which seem to foreshadow the future structure of the classical cantata. At the beginning of the century the aria that has for its text a set of verses divided into stanzas, is much more in recitative form, than is the *madrigale monodique*. It is the case in Caccini's music, in Peri's and in that of Sigismonde d'India. Sometimes, as in the songs, the different couplets are sung to the same air—sometimes the melody and the bass change with each stanza, sometimes again the treble changes, but the bass remains the same. It is this last arrangement which we shall observe in the cantata, when it is making its first start. The chanson does not differ specifically from the air—except by its lighter character, and by having now and then a refrain at the end of the strophes, which are all sung to the same melodic phrase. Of course, a host of other combinations are practised—besides these classical types—and the

distinction between them is sometimes difficult. The authors themselves are mistaken now and then, and an aria is called a madrigal.

The first time we come across the term cantata, it is as the title of a collection of Grandi's—published in 1620: "Cantade e Arie a voce sola." The pieces thus named in this collection, consist for the most part of two stanzas which are sung to different airs, but on the same bass, as in the cantata: "Amor Altri si duol."

Ex. 1



In the same collection is to be found a cantata which is more like an air with variations, for the couplets are sung to the same melodic subject, with very slight change of detail. But this one is an exception, and we may define the original cantata as an air, of which the different couplets are sung to a different melody on the same bass.

In spite of its name, the thing itself was not new, for one finds the same arrangement made by Monteverde, in "L'Orfeo" (1609), and by numerous authors early in the century, though it was then a question of recitative, of which the different stanzas were sung to the same bass. From the year 1620, onwards, the word cantata stands for a very definite musical form, and, it may also be noted, for a form that from the outset is purely lyric. A contrast to the experiments of Monteverde, Sigismonde d'India, and Saraceni, who were all endeavouring to make the recitative more melodious, by practising chromaticism and by exploring unusual melodic intervals.

A little later on, the cantata will also assimilate the element of pathos, but at the outset though brilliant, sweet, and delicate, it seldom has much feeling. A drawing-room piece, in fact, and the composers who write this genre of music aim principally at elegance and grace. Once more, we find no great importance is attached to the literary text; if necessary, it will be altered slightly, in any way which may serve to round off a period, or give point to an illustration. These new developments are very far removed from the aims of Sigismonde d'India, when he wrote in his third book of *Musiche* (1609), "J'ai découvert qu'on pouvait composer à voix seule, avec des intervalles peu communs, passant de manière aussi neuve que possible d'une consonance à une autre," "agreeing perfectly with the words so that the songs may have the more power to stir the passions of the heart." This transformation of the recitative style, by composers like d'India or Monteverde, is contemporary with the first experiments in the *style lyrique monodique*. D'India and Monteverde knew how to find those tones that could create a true dramatic style, and the "Lamente d'Arianna" (1608) is the most perfect model of this kind of work. This new style begins to be seen in the "Songs, Villanelle, Scherzi," published in Venice and in Rome, from about the year 1610 (eight books of villanelle, arie, passaggiate, etc., by Andrea Falconieri). The "Euterpe" of Domenico Brunetti of Bologna, the canzonette of Barbarino, the "Arie e Vaghezzes" of Carlo Milanuzzi (1622-1635), are so many witnesses of the reaction of musicians, and of the public, from the ascetic ideal of the Florentines.

While Monteverde and his fellow artists are transforming the recitative style, infusing life and passion into it, and reviving it with glowing harmonies, agreeable composers are delighting the courts and

cities by inventing easy and graceful songs. Even the creators of the melodramatic movement could not altogether escape from the new tendency. An extraordinary change of style is evident in Caccini's work, between the "Nuove Musiche" (1609) and the "Fuggilozio" (1618). This last collection is composed of short pieces, and they show an ideal much changed from that which he has previously followed. Away with the despairing lover's floods of tears—and complaints of the fatal darts of Love! The music is now brisk in pace, alert, lively, human. The attraction of this style is strongly felt by Monteverde himself, and he gives a good explanation in a letter to a friend, where he says that for him there are two kinds of music, each of which is the complement of the other. The one where you speak by singing, the other where you sing by speaking. The first is the music that belongs to the drama, the second is the lyric music, the music of the cantata and the song.

Monteverde was to show himself equally master of these two contrasting styles. As early as 1624 one finds in the Padre Milanuzzi's collection, "Quattro scherzi delle Arieose Vaghezze," several songs and cantatas of Monteverde's written in the new manner. One is much struck by the evident feeling for simplicity, and even more so by the persistent establishment of a feeling for key. All these little pieces, as well as those of Grandi, S. P. de Negri, Milanuzzi, Kapsberger, and others, modulate from the tonic to the dominant, and finish on the tonic, after a rigorous perfect cadence. We also find in this collection a cantata of Monteverde, which is really classical in form. The six couplets are sung to the same bass and the same symphony divides them, but the melody shows ingenious variations, as will be seen in the first bars of the following three couplets.

Another of Monteverde's cantatas is found in the collection of the Scherzi (1631). It is very ingenious; the instrumental refrain of six bars, for *dessus et basse*, is followed by the first "phrase" of sixteen bars, divided into two equal sections. The first lively, the second slower and of a melancholy character. The six stanzas that follow are all sung to different airs, but with the same bass. Finally, in the eighth book of the madrigals of Monteverde (1638), we find a cantata for three voices, of which the plan is on the whole identical with the one just described, but it allows three virtuosi (two tenors and a bass) to distinguish themselves in turn. The first tenor begins by lamenting his unhappy love, his companions then unite their voices with his, to declare: "*Non me n'adiro, non me ne doglio.*" To the same *basse continue* the second tenor and the bass successively establish the fact of their unchanging love, and each protestation is concluded by the trio singing the refrain. All the

1^{re} COUPLE

5^{me} 8

O ro-me me-zo-sei-la sen'

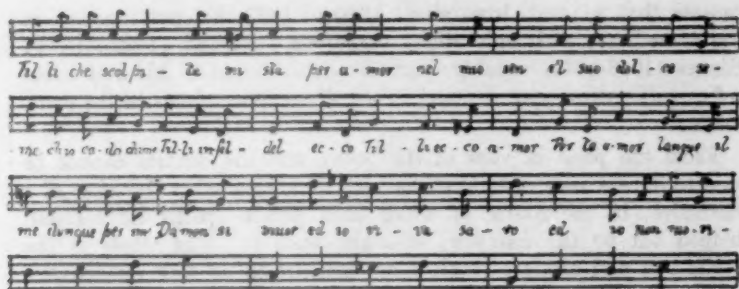
Io mor-rò cert-o (ohi) las so cru-

Qui cad - - - de l'in-fa-zi ce Re.

La sul Therbet la scher-zan-do col bel pie la mia

-del la quid fas so stat - ti al mio pe-mar? Oh-

stor-el-la di-rea pian - gen do il suo mo-ter ohi



Nel li che scolpis - ta mi sia per a - mor nel mio sen e'l suo dol - re se -
 - rvo che so co - do dirmi Nel li infel - del ec - co Tel - l'ec - co a - mor Per la o - mor langue il
 me dunque per me D'amar se vuol ed so vi - ta sa - ro ed so non tuo - ra -



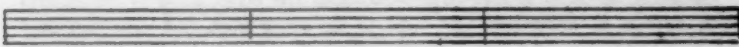

- rui mi tor men - ta co - sì che fra du - ghac mar - ter mi fa
 cor dal le rui per più ta' Nel suo spir ter al - men Per se -
 - ro mai si morrà Da - mon Tel - li di - cea co - sì Quan - do al



1^o e 2^o COUPLETS 3^o COUPLET
 (lo - so) lan - guir



pol cre il tuo son
 duol tra - mor li quan - do al

duol tra - - - - mor - - ti

cantate that we find, from about 1620 to 1630, are put together in the same way, with only slight variations. Rovetta (1629), G. F. Sances (1639-1640), notably, also, Bendetto Fenari in his first books (of *musiche varie*, cioè cantate, arie), all compose pieces in the same manner.

From the point of view of the poetic text the cantata cannot be said to have a very definite character. It always takes the form of a narrative, in the course of which each person speaks for himself, helped out by the narrator, who also ends it. The words of the recitatives and airs are of all sorts, and are in no way remarkable; all the familiar poetic forms are used as in the musical drama.

The librettists whose names one hears oftenest are Benigni, Respighiosi, Francesco Buti, Francesco Melosio, Gio Filippe, Apollonio, Prospero Mandosi, etc., etc. Little by little, the narrative style of the cantata was given up, and from about 1630, onwards, the new type of secular cantata, consisting of alternate airs and recitatives, began to appear. In its new aspect the cantata was the result of applying the *système monodique* to a kind of narrative poem, which hitherto had always been treated in the style of a madrigal. From the literary point of view, there is no difference in construction between the text of certain madrigals by Monteverde, for five voices, and those cantatas for solo voice, by Luigi Rossi, Carissimi, and Scarlatti. Each is a narrative, often a description treated in recitative manner, then, one of the characters mentioned in this introduction steps forward to sing of his love, or complain of Fortune's cruelty. The air is followed by another narrative, which introduces a new phrase (*stanza*), so that, as Romain Rolland aptly says, "The verses are a bouquet; the strands of recitative, the string that binds it together."

The poetic construction of the classic cantata is already found, then, in the dramatic madrigals of Monteverde and Mazzochi, as well as in the work of Orezio Vecchi and other madrigalists of the end of the sixteenth century. But it is not only from the literary point of view that one can trace in the madrigal the origin of the cantata style; musically, also, the madrigal to a great extent prepares the way for the cantata.

As early as 1606 Monteverde published his sixth book of madrigals with *continuo*, described as "apt to be sung with the clavecin and other instruments." In a madrigal such as "Qui rise, o Tirsi," for instance, one can clearly see the near approach of the cantata style. Above the *basse continue* the high voices, and then the deep voices, two and two, vie with each other, follow each other, and entwine in long successions of thirds. The dialogue for seven voices, "Presso un fiume tranquillo," is the prototype of the cantata

for several voices, and of "l'Histoire sacrée." The part of the narrator, or that of the ancient chorus, is taken by the *ensembles*, and when they are silent the different characters have solos with *continuo*. Thus we already see that *opéra de concert* which will develop into the cantata for several voices, and later on, into the oratorio.

In this sixth book is found the famous "Combattimento di Tancredi e di Clorinde." It not only foreshadows in its musical and practical construction the grand cantatas for several voices by Carissimi and Scarlatti, but even to a great degree the oratorios of Handel and Bach. The poem is founded on the famous episode in Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered," in which is described the duel of Tancred with the warlike Clorinde, "suited in all points like a man." Characters (only three): The Narrator (the future historian of the Sacred Cantata), Tancred, Clorinde.

The orchestra is composed of strings only. The hero takes the place of the Narrator at the point where the speeches are given by Tasso. When the voices are silent, the action is indicated by the music of the orchestra. "Il Combattimento" dates from 1624, and it is probable that the cantatas by Domenico Mazzochi for several voices (collected in 1638), in the collection entitled "Dialoghi e Sonetti," are not very much later. The construction is exactly the same as in the "Combattimento." Though in his "Maddalena Errante" Mazzochi still retains the same plan as that of the madrigal, though his narrative is sung by three voices in unison *en un contrepont homophone*, though he accompanies with two voices, the Madeleine's touching "Adieu à la Patrie"; yet, on the other hand, he manages the recitative style also, with vigour and originality, in his cantata "Dido Furens," and "Olindo e Sofronia." The first is composed to Virgil's own words. The poet sings the narrative part, with the bass voice. Dido and Eneas have dialogue or monologue in regular time, and the cantata ends with a short *ensemble*. The recitative style reigns from one end of his work to the other. The author gives minute and emphatic directions (such as *adagio*, *piano*, *arrabiato*, *concitato*, *largo poi stretto*), which at that period were quite the exception. The poetry is translated with appreciation and intelligence. The cantata for four characters, "Olinde e Sofronia," founded on some verses of Torquato Tasso, is more in the spirit of the new genre.

The *recitatif* inclines to the *arioso* and exhibits features *et des mélismes qui permettent à la voix de se déployer et de faire valoir ses agréments*. The cantata "Euriale" is the most touching of the collection, the recitative for the mother of Euriale is deeply emotional. In the text the finest shades are scrupulously respected, and the singers are definitely forbidden to take any liberties with it.

In short, though one may find in the dramatic madrigals of Monteverde and the "Dialoghi" of Mazzochi the plan and the idea of the classical cantata, these are very far from having the real cantata spirit, for the cantata, as we have constantly pointed out, is essentially lyric, and not dramatic. Those composers who find themselves bored by the recitative drama take refuge with the cantata; Mazzochi himself, in the "Sonetti Harmonizetti," which he prints at the end of his collection, practises the new style of the cantata with ease.

These pieces are very interesting with regard to their construction, and they mark a definite stage of development. If the cantata "Quando io rimembre," on a sonnet of Cardinal Ubaldine, still keeps to the design of the first cantatas that we have been studying (in which the different phrases are sung to the same *basse continue*), on the other hand, the continual roulades and ornaments proclaim a new ideal, of the *bel canto*, far removed from that of the Florentines.

The first sonnet, on the verses of Pope Urbain VIII, "Il dilette terreno è momentano," is very interesting in its construction, and shows a sense of *équilibre tonal* rather refined for the period. Contrary to the rule hitherto observed, the *basse continue* changes with each stanza (phrase). The first, in the key of G major, is entrusted to a tenor; the second, which modulates to A minor, to a soprano; the third, in A major, to a bass; and the three voices together sing the final tercet (trio), which returns to the key of G major. These modulations to neighbouring keys were then a novelty, though to us they may seem rather childish. One of the chief merits of the cantata was that it taught composers to construct a work in several parts, comprising alternate airs and recitatives, on a well thought out "tonal" plan.

HENRI DE PRUNIERES.

(To be continued.)

VINCENZO BELLINI (1802-1835)

THE prestige of a universally accepted opinion is so great that it is sometimes exceedingly difficult, even for the most clear-sighted and intelligent critic, to throw off its hypnotic influence and arrive at an independent point of view. Indeed, a very large proportion of our habitual standards of judgment are merely prejudices, so hallowed by tradition and sanctified by constant repetition as to have attained to the august status and dignity of incontrovertible truths. We are all apt to accept them unconsciously, to take them for granted, in the same way that we take it for granted that the earth goes round the sun. In the words of the Bellman in that greatest of all modern epic poems, Lewis Carroll's "Hunting of the Snark," "what I tell you three times must be true"; and we have been told so often and for so long that Bellini, together with his companion in crime, Donizetti, represents the nadir of music, that it is virtually impossible to-day to find a musician sufficiently unprejudiced against him to take the trouble even to look at his work, or to listen to it with an open mind and without preconceived ideas concerning it. For it is a curious fact that it is easier for us to be unprejudiced to the extent of detecting faults in a work which we had always been taught to regard as a masterpiece, than to that of finding good qualities or redeeming features in one which we had been previously taught to despise. Why this should be so it is difficult to say; it is true none the less.

This contemptuous attitude towards Bellini, which has now become traditional, was probably first systematically adopted by the Wagnerians, in accordance with their habitual inability to tolerate the existence of any possible rival, however modest and unassuming, to the object of their veneration. That the master himself did not share in this attitude is clearly shown by an article which he once wrote concerning Bellini, in which he expressed the following sentiments:—"How often must it have happened that, after being transported by a French or Italian opera at the theatre, upon coming out we have scouted our emotion with a pitying jest, and, arrived safe home again, have read ourselves a lecture on the danger of

giving way to transports. Let us for once drop the jest, let us spare ourselves for once the sermon, and ponder what it was that so enchanted us; we shall then find, especially with Bellini, that it was the limpid melody, the simple, noble, beautiful song. To confess this and believe in it is surely not a sin; it were no sin if before we fell asleep we breathed a prayer that one day Heaven would give German composers such melodies and such a mode of handling song.—To make merry over its defects is quite beside the question: had Bellini taken lessons from a German village-schoolmaster, presumably he would have learnt to do better; but that he would perhaps have unlearned his song into the bargain is certainly to be very much feared. Let us therefore leave to this lucky Bellini the cut of his pieces, habitual with all the Italians, his crescendos, tutti, and cadenzas that regularly succeed the theme, and all those other mannerisms which so disturb our spleen; they are the stable forms than which the Italians know no other, and by no means so dreadful in many respects. If we would only consider the boundless disorder, the jumble of forms, periods, and modulations, of many a modern German opera-composer, distracting our enjoyment of the single beauties strewn between, we might often heartily wish this frayed-out tangle put in order by that stable Italian form."

It will be said, no doubt, that this is the utterance of a young and undeveloped mind, and not representative of his mature views; but this is not so. It is true, of course, that later, in his theoretical writings, Wagner says many hard things against Bellini, but so he does against all his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, especially those from whom he found it most profitable to steal. One must always distinguish carefully between Wagner's private and public opinions, between his *ex cathedra* utterances and his personal sentiments; and the fact that he always cherished a warm affection for Bellini is shown by the following statement, made in the last years of his life: "People believe that I hate all the Italian school of music and specially Bellini. No, no, a thousand times no; Bellini is one of my predilections, because his music is strongly felt and intimately bound up with the words. The music which on the contrary I abhor, is that which mocks at the libretto and the situations."

If I have dwelt at length on Wagner's attitude towards the music of Bellini, it is because one might naturally suppose that an art seemingly so remote from and opposed to his own would have aroused his antipathy rather than his sympathy. But it would be possible to quote similar tributes on the part of many musicians of the most opposite and divergent tendencies. The sincerest tribute, however,

that one composer can possibly pay to another is to write music, whether consciously or not, that clearly reveals his indebtedness to the other. It would be difficult to name any composer who has been paid so many involuntary tributes of this kind, even by those most hostile to his art, as Bellini. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that no musician has ever exercised a profounder influence on his contemporaries and successors. Consider for a moment what the specific quality is in the music of the nineteenth century which most sharply differentiates it from that of the eighteenth century. It is not so much the change in harmonic idiom or the development of orchestral colour, great though they are, as a new type of melodic writing. This is the primary factor in the transformation; the others are only secondary. Compare, for example, such typically nineteenth century themes as those of the *Liebestod* in *Tristan*, or in the Nocturnes of Chopin, with any characteristically Mozartean or even Beethovenian melodies, and the difference will be felt at once. They belong to entirely different worlds. And the composer who first touched this new note, the man who invented this new type of melody, different to everything which had gone before, was Bellini. A few examples will place this beyond dispute.

Ex. 1.



Ex. 2.



Ex. 8.

The musical score for Ex. 8 consists of six systems of piano accompaniment. Each system is written for piano (p) and includes a treble and bass staff. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The first system is marked *pp* (pianissimo). The third system is marked *cresc.* (crescendo). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The first of these examples is the seed from which many of Chopin's most beautiful and individual melodies have grown; the second reveals the origin of Liszt's suave and voluptuous cantilenas; the third obviously suggested to Wagner the ending to the *Liebestod*.

In other words, the note of ecstasy, of passionate lyricism and elegiac melancholy which came into music in the nineteenth century was introduced by Bellini, and by him alone. Bellini is the father of modern melody, and not one of those who most decry him to-day could write as they do on every page if it had not been for him. Even Berlioz, who professed the utmost contempt for Bellini, was compelled to write in his melodic idiom when he wished to give expression in his music to the utmost passion and ardour. The *Scène d'amour* in his *Romeo and Juliet* is full of the Bellinian spirit, and even the love themes of Strauss's *Salome* and *Elektra* are directly traceable to Bellinian prototypes. One finds the influence at work in the most unlikely places. This, one would imagine, came out of *I Capuletti e Montecchi* :—

Ex. 4:



but no; it happens to come from the Trio in A minor for clarinet, violoncello and piano by one Johannes Brahms.

The above examples and allusions being all of a more or less luscious order, it might be supposed that Bellini's only influence on music was of this kind; that consequently he is less to be praised than blamed. From one point of view, undoubtedly, Bellini can legitimately be regarded as a corruptor of music, as Rousseau and Chateaubriand can be regarded as corruptors of literature. This is, in fact, the fashionable point of view to-day, the eighteenth century attitude. But even if we may dislike intensely the personal contribution of Rousseau or Chateaubriand or Lamartine to literature and thought, it is impossible to deny the value of their impersonal influence in the matter of vocabulary and language generally—an influence from which all alike have benefited, even those who are most antagonistic to the individual writers in question; not only Victor Hugo, but also Flaubert, the Goncourts, and through them all the most typically "modern" and anti-romantic French writers.

So with Bellini. We are perfectly at liberty to dislike and even to despise the more personal aspect of Bellini's contribution to

modern music, and to regret that he made Chopin, Liszt, Wagner, and Strauss possible; but ultimately even Schönberg and Stravinsky can be shown to owe a great deal to him in the matter of melodic idiom.

Yes, it may be answered, that is to a certain extent true. We admit that possibly Bellini may be an historical figure of the greatest importance, what Mr. Newman calls a seminal force, but that is all. He showed the way to other composers of greater talent than himself; all that is significant and vital in his art has been absorbed by them, leaving behind nothing but an empty husk in his actual achievement which is no longer of any interest or value to us to-day. He is of no more intrinsic significance to music than the drone is to the bee hive. Once he has fecundated the queen bee his sole function has been fulfilled; let him now, like it, turn inside out and die.

Is this wholly true? I think not. In the first place, beautiful though the melodies of Chopin, Liszt, and Wagner may be, it cannot be denied that they are generally very much shorter-winded than those of Bellini at his best. I would not go so far as to say categorically that they were all incapable of writing melodies as sustained and flowing as those of the Italian master, as Strauss, for example, certainly is; the fact remains that they did not write them. Here at least he remains unexcelled among composers of the nineteenth century, while among those of all time only the very greatest, such as Bach and Beethoven, have shown greater power in this direction.

In the second place, there is a purely personal quality in some of Bellini's melodies which have not become common property. Take, for example, the justly celebrated melody of "Casta diva," from *Norma*.





Do we not find here a purity of line and a delicacy of sentiment which is lacking in the somewhat overheated music of any of the composers mentioned above? Bellini's work may indeed be a pillaged ruin, like the pagan temples of ancient Rome which served as a quarry from which later edifices were built, but here is surely a Temple of Vesta which has escaped alike despoilers and the ravages of time. Even if nothing else of his survived, this alone would be sufficient to ensure Bellini's immortality.

Granted then, for the sake of argument, continues our imaginary interlocutor, that Bellini is a great master of a certain type of elegiac melody, even one of the greatest, if you would have it so; but this is not enough in itself. He achieved such heights very seldom, while the bulk of his music is so inferior as to be often merely vulgar and commonplace.

Now, it must be admitted quite frankly that there is a considerable amount of truth in this contention. It must be remembered, however, that a great deal of what seems to us to be trivial and vulgar has only become so in the course of time, through association. Bellini's melodic idioms have passed into common speech and become the stock-in-trade of generations of second and third-rate opera composers, to say nothing of song and ballad writers. "Every harlot was a virgin once," said William Blake, and most of the reproach which we level at Bellini should by rights be directed at those responsible for the corruption and defilement of his once virginal muse. The same process is to be seen at work in the art of every age, our own not excepted; the artist's personal idiom is first employed by a few, then rapidly becomes popular, and is finally vulgarised and debased. The harmonic and melodic idioms of *Tristan*, once considered so abstruse and incomprehensible, are to be heard every day in the cinema; Underground posters and advertisements follow the manner and method of Cézanne, Gauguin and van Gogh.

These considerations must be taken into account when we reproach Bellini with the triviality and vulgarity of a great part of his music. They cannot, however, be said to exonerate him entirely. It is impossible to deny, for example, that the beauty of "Casta diva" is greatly impaired by the banality and emptiness of the succeeding section. But even here we must be careful to guard against prejudice. Every generation of composers employs its own particular variety of musical stuffing and padding. In each instance the comparative novelty of the procedure disguises the underlying emptiness, in the eyes of contemporary observers; it is only after it has become familiar, as that of Bellini has to-day, that it seems surprising it should ever have been tolerated. Intrinsically, however, it is no more empty and trivial than Beethoven's interminable scale passages, Wagner's mechanical sequences, the chromatically descending sevenths of Delius, or the endless repetitions of the same bar or two which we encounter in most modern music. There is every reason to suppose that all these procedures will seem as wearisome and banal to the ears of future generations of musicians as those of Bellini do to ours. They will no doubt be endured with an equally bad grace on account of the manifold beauties which they environ and enfold.

Finally, it must always be borne in mind that the sound of such things is often very different from their appearance on paper, or their effect when played on the piano. This fact is readily admitted when orchestral music is in question; it is not generally realised that it applies with even greater force to vocal music. The simplest and most obvious melodic progressions are those which sound best when sung; the complex and elaborate almost invariably fails in its effect. And so with the music of Bellini. What may seem to us to be a trivial and colourless melody is often in reality a most delicately constructed organism, demanding a particular *tessitura* and general style of singing of which we have no longer any conception. In consequence of the modern instrumental treatment of the voice, the secret of singing such music is almost entirely lost; except for a few representatives of the older generation, such as Battistini, there is nobody who can render it in the proper manner. It is indeed a curious reflection that, while to-day the greatest virtue a composer can possess is a sense of instrumental values and a supreme talent for orchestral virtuosity, it is considered almost a crime to write effectively for the voice.

But perhaps the commonest reproach which is made against Bellini concerns the bareness and poverty of his harmony and the crudity of his orchestral accompaniments. On the face of it the reproach has a certain justification, but a moment's consideration will show that it also is largely the outcome of our modern prejudices. Can anyone

seriously contend that Bellini's music would be improved by enriching his harmonies and providing it with an elaborate instrumental texture? On the contrary, his vocal writing could only be impaired by such treatment. Like folk-song, it instinctively rejects harmonic elaboration as foreign to its nature. On the other hand, unlike folk-song, it demands some kind of background. In the same way that a jewel is displayed to better advantage in a simple setting than in none at all, but overshadowed by the brilliance of an elaborate one, so a melody of Bellini requires a certain degree of accompaniment which must never be allowed to become so obtrusive as to distract our attention from the melody, or to impress itself too strongly on our consciousness. It is interesting to learn that Bizet, who had been commissioned to rescore *Norma*, came eventually to this conclusion, and gave up the task in despair, saying, "For these melodies the appropriate accompaniment is that given to them by Bellini"; and another composer of very different tendencies, namely, Cherubini, similarly observed, "It would be impossible to place any other accompaniments underneath these melodies."

The final conclusion to which all these adverse criticisms of Bellini tend is that he possessed considerable natural talent, but was unable to turn it to its best advantage on account of his grave technical deficiencies; that if he had only taken the trouble to learn his *métier* properly he might in time have written good music. All these statements are entirely unfounded. Those of his friends who knew him as a young man all testify to the fact that he worked very diligently at the Naples Conservatoire under Zingarelli; that not content with this, he secretly took lessons with other masters at the same time; that he knew all the works of Pergolesi by heart, and had copied out most of the string quartets of Haydn and Mozart.

This theory of Bellini's incompetence and lack of technical resource is based entirely on prejudice and ignorance. If elegant workmanship and striking harmonic progressions and elaborate concerted numbers are infrequent in his operas the reason is not that he was incapable of them, but simply because he deliberately avoided them as being contrary to his æsthetic purpose. It was his expressed conviction that musical artifices destroyed the dramatic effect. (*Gli artifizî musicali ammazzano l'effetto delle situazioni.*) If his critics would turn to his comparatively unknown opera, *Il Pirata*, written before the composer was clearly conscious of his ideals and direction—i.e., before he had written the works which have been considered to be incompetent, such as *La Sonnambula* or *Norma*—they would discover that Bellini possessed as sound a technique as any composer of his time. See, for example, the delicately wrought quintet

MUSIC AND LETTERS

"*Parlarti ancor per poco*," which forms the finale to the first act. As far as workmanship is concerned, it is as flawless as a quintet of Mozart.

The truth of the matter is that Bellini was a great innovator; like all innovators or highly personal artists he has been judged according to a preconceived notion of what he ought, in his critic's eyes, to have been doing, instead of what he actually set out to do. Berlioz, Moussorgsky, and in our own day Delius, have had precisely the same criticism to contend against.

Bellini himself was well aware of what he had to expect from his critics. He used to say that, whenever he abandoned himself to the natural and unfettered promptings of his genius, a long and thin spectre, with a yellow face and huge staring eyes, would arise and take shape. It would then approach him, and, gazing fixedly into his eyes with a bitter smile, would contemplate ironically the inspiration in his heart, and cause his fingers to tremble on the keyboard. This spectre was the personification of the spirit of Pedantry, and seemed to say to him, "Beware! what does it matter to me that you have been able to move the spectators, and to excite them to a frenzy of enthusiasm with your beautiful melodies, with your impassioned accents? For in the end it is I who am to be your judge. Woe to you if you have not succeeded in showing yourself to be a master of counterpoint, if there should happen to be occasional weak and simple harmonies in your accompaniments! Woe to you if you should seem to me to have been more inspired than learned!"

When Bellini said that "*gli artifizi musicali ammazzano l'effetto delle situazioni*," he was only anticipating the theories of Wagner. When the latter declared that he admired the music of Bellini because "It is intimately bound up with the words," he showed a very acute perception of the æsthetic aims of his predecessor, which were, in fact, not so very far removed from his own, despite their difference in method and approach. The method of Bellini is to identify himself momentarily with the actor in the drama, and to sum up the dramatic situation in a single melodic line; Wagner adopts rather the attitude of the chorus in Greek drama, and constructs an elaborate orchestral commentary upon the situation. And it is Wagner himself who wrote once that "The instantaneous appreciation of a whole dramatic passion is made far easier when with all its allied feelings and emotions that passion is brought by one firm stroke into one clear and striking melody, than when it is patched with a hundred tiny commentaries, with this and that harmonic nuance, the interjection of first one instrument and then another, till at last it is doctored out of sight."

Bellini's method of work, as described by him in a communication

to a friend, is very illuminating. " Since I have determined to write few works, not more than one a year, I bring to bear on them my utmost powers of invention. Believing as I do that a great part of the success of a work depends on the choice of an interesting subject with a strong contrast of passions, harmonious and deeply-felt verses, and not merely dramatic situations, my first object is to obtain a perfect drama from a good writer. Once the work of the poet has been completed I study attentively the dispositions of the characters, the passions which sway them, and the sentiments which they express. Possessed by the feelings of each of them, I imagine myself for the moment to have become the one who is speaking, and I make an effort to feel like him, and to express myself in his manner. Knowing that music results from the employment of variety of sounds, and that the passions of mankind manifest themselves by means of the utterance of diverse tones, I have reproduced the language of passion in my art through incessant observation.

" Then in the seclusion of my study I begin to declaim the parts of the different characters in the drama with the utmost warmth, observing in the meanwhile the inflexions of my voice, the degree of haste or languor in their delivery—the accent, in short—and the tone of expression which nature gives to the man who is in the throes of emotion; and I find in this way the musical motives and *tempi* best adapted to their communication to others through the medium of sounds.

" I transfer the result to paper, try it over on the piano, and if I feel in it the corresponding emotion I consider myself to have succeeded. If I do not, then I begin again."

In this way " *Casta diva* " was re-written no fewer than eight times before the composer was satisfied with the result. We are a long way off here from the facile tune-trundling which is the conception entertained by most people of Bellini's music. " *Col mio stile devo vomitare sangue,*" he once remarked; and we can well believe it. His aim, it will be seen, is not very different from that of the modern song-writer—very similar indeed to that of Moussorgsky and Debussy, namely, to find the declamation which will preserve exactly the accent and the inner emotion of the words. But while they generally remain satisfied with that achievement, Bellini, in his arias, is only at the beginning of his task. While endeavouring to preserve accent and psychological truth, he then attempts to build both these elements into a faultless melodic line. Small wonder if he should sometimes fail! The wonder is that he should have achieved it so often. When he does, the result is as near perfection as anything in music, as in the following melody from *La Sonnambula* :

Ex. 6.

d'un pen - sier - o e d'un ac -

- cen - to res non sono, res non son, cò il - fui

gramma - - i. Ah! se fe - de in me - non

hai, ah! se fe - de in me - non ha - i mal rispondi a tanto a mor

To hear this and the succeeding ensemble sung as they ought to be sung, is infallibly to experience one of these rare thrills which convince us at once that we are in the presence of great art.

The majority of Italian operatic composers, such as Cimarosa, Rossini and Mercadante, have little or no feeling for the dramatic situation or the expression of the emotion conveyed by the words. It is related of Mercadante that he once set to music the words *cala il sipario* (the curtain falls), thinking that they were part of the text of the libretto. Bellini, on the contrary, is at his best when the dramatic situation is most intense; where the dramatic or human interest wanes in his operas, the musical interest similarly diminishes. Consequently the weakest parts are always in those places where a composer like Rossini excels—where an opportunity is afforded by the libretto for purely musical development unimpeded by dramatic exigencies. At such moments he simply writes the first thing that enters his head; anything will do. He entirely lacks purely musical invention, and it is in this dependence upon a dramatic and emotional stimulus that both his virtues and his defects reside.

The spirit which animates this music is profoundly Latin. It is true that it lacks entirely the immense vitality and exuberance that characterise the art of Dante, Ariosto, Manzoni in literature, Michael Angelo, Mantegna, and Signorelli in painting, Rossini, Verdi and Cimarosa in music; its affinities are rather with the softer and more feminine tradition represented by Petrarch, Tasso, and Leopardi, Botticelli, Perugino and Raphael, by Pergolesi, Paisiello and Piccini. In spite of its *morbidezza* and romantic sentimentality it nevertheless retains the purity of line which is the hall-mark of all classic art. Above all the music of Bellini is essentially Sicilian. It is full of the scent of the almond blossom and the orange groves of his native city

Cantania, and the serene light of its unchanging summer skies. *La Sonnambula* is like an idyll of Theocritus, and *Norma*, with all its imperfections, like the ruined temples of Girgenti, a few lovely columns standing up proudly from a mound of rubble, facing Africa.

To what extent, if any, Bellini owed this Sicilian quality in his music to the employment or imitation of Sicilian folk-song, it is exceedingly difficult to say. A little tune such as the following from *La Sonnambula* has obviously many of the characteristics of the songs which the Sicilian peasant sings to-day :

Ex. 7.



but the interactions of folk- and art-music are so complex and obscure that it is quite probable that these melodic idioms were invented by Bellini and imitated from him by the common people. On the other hand, the frequent recurrence in Bellini's music of 12/8 rhythms, called in 17th and 18th century music *Siciliani*, seems always to have been a feature of the popular music of his countrymen.

We shall probably be safe in assuming that the influence was reciprocal; that Bellini borrowed a certain amount from Sicilian folk-song, and that it in turn was modified by his music. We are certainly told by one of his biographers that he made a collection of folk-songs when he was a young man, but we are not told whether he made use of it in his compositions.

We often speak of the premature death of great artists and all that has been lost thereby, without taking into consideration the question whether the particular talent was susceptible of further development or not. It is, of course, impossible to dogmatise upon the point, but as a rule it will be found that those artists who have died young have come to maturity earlier than those for whom a long life was in store. Without going so far as to suggest that there is a

divine and omniscient purpose at the back of it, one does nevertheless feel that there is generally a definite correspondence between the growth of the artist's mind to maturity and the span of his mortal existence. For example, it is difficult to believe that Mozart or Schubert would have achieved anything more than they actually did even if they had each lived to be a hundred, except, of course, in actual quantity. The former had reached as near to perfection as is permitted to mortals, while the latter seems to have lacked just that absolute quality of supreme genius which would have enabled him to achieve any more than he actually did.

With Bellini, on the other hand, one can safely say that it is impossible to estimate what the world lost through his premature death. Right up to the end one can discern a steady progress in every direction which must inevitably have continued for many years. He seems to be one of the few eminent figures in art who have died before reaching complete maturity and relative perfection. In his early years his taste was admittedly uncertain, but in later years he became increasingly self-critical, without the corresponding diminution in creative power which so often accompanies such a development. Although his last opera, *I Puritani*, is perhaps not his best, it is certainly a better whole than any of his others. It has not the same stylistic inequalities, and the general level of inspiration is probably higher, although never rising to quite the same heights as the best things in *Norma* or *La Sonnambula*. In no sense can it be considered to indicate a falling-off, or even an arrested development. If it could be said with comparative certainty of any artist that he died with his work only half done, it could be said of Bellini. We have not even the consolation of knowing that it has since been carried to completion by any successor. It was along the path which he traced out that the autonomous development of Italian opera lay, and not along that which has led to-day to the corruption of its intrinsic nature through its subjection to the baneful Wagnerian influence. His solution of the eternal operatic problem, by avoiding on the one side the pitfall of non-dramatic music-making into which so many of his contemporaries and predecessors had fallen, and that of the anti-lyrical Teutonic ideal on the other, was one of the most wholly satisfying which has yet been made, from a purely abstract point of view. The manifest imperfections of his operas are the result of his immaturity, not of his æsthetic principles, which were fundamentally sound and in accordance with the unalterable nature and the highest traditions of Italian art. The neglect of them has led modern Italian music into a morass from which it will probably never extricate itself.

CECIL GRAY.

BERLIOZ THE CRITIC—I

THE creative genius is seldom a good critic. "The true guide in matters of taste," writes Sir W. H. Hadow, "is the man who just misses the supreme productive intuition, and receives a double portion of analytical insight in its place." The critic's function is to show us round the rooms of the palace of art: he must know them, and see how they differ from each other, and find out what each one contributes to the splendour of the building. He will admit preferences, or else he would be, as Wilde saw, not an artist but an auctioneer; yet he will not talk to us as one of the dwellers in those rooms might talk. Not that they, the inspired, cannot say wonderful things on occasion, when conviction or intuition overflows into speech, from a mind intent on the wonders of its own habitation. It would take many pages of professional criticism to beat the saying of Bach, that music exists for the glory of God and the delight of humanity. Sometimes the overflow of the creative musical mind takes the form of a theoretic work, challenging in its day, like Rameau's, or it may run to militant prefaces and pamphlets, like those of Gluck or Wagner. Or, again, in a period of favourable culture, it may turn into real literature, graceful and urbane, like the opening pages of Morley's *Plain and Easy Introduction*.

What, though, of the born composer who turn ready writer and critic in earnest, in an age when a large mixed public is waiting to read him in periodicals? Music is a jealous mistress, not ready to forgive even those who desert her to write about her. Two composers, near contemporaries, did this most signally of any; and their art, musical and literary, has serious flaws. Yet a Schumann who had mastered his counterpoint and learned to write effectively for the orchestra would have been dearly bought, at the expense of much alert and sympathetic criticism. The dæmonic force of Berlioz, concentrated on his own art, might have given us a composer whose musical ideas, and power of musical construction, were as great as was his genius for instrumentation. But French literature would then have been the poorer by many vivid and witty pages; the world might have lost one of its best autobiographies. Romanticism confounded the boundaries of the arts; and Berlioz has been called Romanticism itself.

It is difficult to like him, this noisy person, with so little of reticence in his music, his writing or his life. He is violent in adoration as in

reprobation, given to convulsions of rage, orgies of sentiment; he can be tasteless, cruel, vindictive; he is always striking attitudes. But do what he may, he generally ends by impressing himself on the charitable hearer or reader. Such a man may pose, and yet be essentially sincere; he is watching himself, playing up to himself; without some such duality of motive there could hardly be any artists. Berlioz has keenly piercing eyes for the musical world about him, and a vivid store of words in which to set down his impressions. It is human, also, to like to read about a fight. In the history of art there have been few such fighters as Berlioz. There was the struggle with parents who opposed his vocation, the struggle in Paris against downright want, the life-long battle with reactionaries and incompetents—Cherubini, the Conservatoire, the Opera. His wild courtship, the bitter sequel to his marriage, the triumphs for his works abroad, set off in cruel irony against the indifference or the hostility of the Parisian public, which broke his heart in the end; the tragic last years when he believed in nothing, not even in himself, but kept at any rate a cloak of scorn to wrap about him—it is hard to resist such a story, told as he tells it. The great names in French art have rarely been of this daemonic stamp. Her distinctive tradition is one of order and restraint. Yet before her *grand siècle* she had Rabelais, whom Berlioz recalls in his headlong impetus of literary utterance, in his megalomania and his mocking spirit. And when, in the nineteenth century, Romanticism came into its own, Berlioz grew up with writers who could feed his fires. 1830, the year in which he won the Prix de Rome, was the year of the triumph of Hugo's *Hernani*. The new school, unmusical crew though they were, accepted him as their representative in the sister art. He could, indeed, command imperious terrors in music which rank with Hugo's in literature; he could sentimentalise as could Musset or Lamartine; he had a world-weariness heavy as Chateaubriand's, bitter as Byron's; these men were all in their measure his kindred spirits.

His literary evolution is more complex than such influences might imply. It is also, on the whole, saner and less flawed than his musical evolution. As a boy he was overwhelmed with Dido's fate in the *Aeneid*. It was a law of his being to feel certain impressions with abnormal keenness, and then to show traces of them in his work to the end. M. Rolland has pointed out the Virgilian strain in him, a spring of pity and delicacy, happily strengthened by his early worship of Gluck. These two between them stimulated whatever was refined and charitable in his writing, whatever was delicate and sculptured in his music. This classical side is not his familiar one, but it exists. There were other such influences; like a good normal Frenchman he loved his La Fontaine and his Molière. The wit that is the bloom of

good sense reinforced his charity. Indeed, in *Les Grotesques de la Musique* he has supplied a piquant footnote to *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. It seems that the parterre always laughed when M. Jourdain, arranging with his music master for a little concert, demands a "trompette marine." And they were wrong, Berlioz reminds us, for this absurdly named object was in reality a tall, one-stringed instrument, very quiet in tone, no horrible brazen trump, "capable d'effaroucher les ânes." "Il croit, ce brave parterre," goes on Berlioz, "que Molière a fait dire à M. Jourdain une colossale bêtise, quand il lui a prêté seulement une naïveté." It is curious to find an ultra-Romantic thus anxious for the right exegesis of Molière; and to find a mocker, savage as Berlioz often was, sheltering M. Jourdain, of all people, from any drops of ridicule not his due.

Clearly, however, another impulse prompted this correction—the composer's knowledge of instruments. His uncanny instinct for their effect is beyond doubt the chief gift for which his successors have thanked and will thank him. This instinct has itself a literary aspect. We can scarcely open a page of his *Traité d'Instrumentation* without finding there some definite emotional or pictorial effect duly ticked off, as the inevitable result of the use of certain instruments in certain ways. These effects, or values, he constantly defines in words. Without reopening a tiresome question, we merely suggest that with a musical education so flawed he could not have done better. A man who hated Bach and Handel, a man to whom counterpoint was usually an arid puzzle, fit for pedants or for clumsy parody, a man whose power of musical construction was so unsteady, had to clutch hard at anything—an emotional state, a story, a character in a play, a scene treasured in the mind—anything, besides his instruments, that might help him to set down the music stirring within him. He clutched hard at Shakespeare; it may be that his chief literary passion did him more good than his chief musical one. For while he adored the emotional force of Beethoven, and was often in some way fired by it, he profited little by what might have helped him more, his idol's firm grasp of construction. Though the melodrama, the externals, often drew him to Shakespeare, yet two of his finest things, the "Scène d'amour" and the "Queen Mab" scherzo, were directly inspired by passages in *Romeo and Juliet*. And Shakespeare is sprinkled through his writings in a fashion which points not merely to study, but to the most companionable intimacy with some of the plays. When he quotes, as epigraph to his *Mémoires*, the lines which open to us the deepest abyss of Macbeth's despair, it is not just because they look impressive, but because he has faced the same feeling and come to the same conviction. When he is writing a feuilleton, on the whole-some text that only musical people should concern themselves with

music, he must needs quote a good part of the opening scene of *The Tempest*, where the boatswain scolds the interfering nobles. Elsewhere, down goes Falstaff's soliloquy on honour, and a little character sketch; ostensibly to please some friends who want to know more about him. Sanity, humour, here again, are fed by the literary rather than the musical passions of Berlioz.

Another great steadying force was the French language, still, by its nature and by the way it is taught, the incomparable instrument of clear, logical expression. Wild as his ideas might be, they had to mind their paces a little in French, or even he would see their absurdity. His writing remains full of extravagance and contradiction; what would have happened had his medium been English, or, worst of all, German? We think of Wagner and his stupefying wordiness; of cloudy stuff in Schumann, better writer though he is. French helped to give point to Berlioz's thinking; it barbed his arrows, pointed his shafts of wit; even his earliest letters and criticisms show clearly, amid their rawness, signs of the true Frenchman's knack with the pen.

By his own account, his beginnings in criticism were characteristic. Still a youth, but already an adorer of Gluck and Spontini, one day he could no longer contain his fury at the attacks of the Rossinians on these composers. So he sent a tremendous article to the *Revue Quotidienne*. The editor's answer was a "this will never do," with a lecture on the crime of window-smashing. Berlioz volunteered to tone down the article, but the mood failed and he abandoned it. This story gives the gesture, or attitude, of his critical writing in the mass. He raids an enemy's country; even when he praises, the savage undersong of "Woe to objectors!" is seldom wholly silent. He had, not reasoned preferences and dislikes, but idols and aversions. His critical baggage, fairly considerable, goes under these two categories without much straining or leaving out. We start with the aversions, best exemplified in the two collections, *Les Grotesques de la musique*, and *Les Soirées d'orchestre*.

He put his own criticism in the category of aversions. A strain of grumbling persists through it: writing interfered with his music; it was pot-boiling; quick though he was at composition, he wrote slowly; the hunt for words, with the printer waiting, was torture; and so forth; there is plenty of it. Yet much may be discounted, for he was given to self-pity. After all, money, and power in the world of music, were things he desired. His writing gave him both; his music, so far as France was concerned, gave him neither, or gave them only on the most precarious tenure. From 1835 onwards he commanded, in the *Gazette Musicale*, and later in the *Journal des Débats*, well-placed pulpits from which he could denounce the Philistines, and proclaim

to the world his own musical gospel. Yet listen to this lament from *Les Grottesques* :—

“ Trop misérables critiques ! Pour eux, l'hiver n'a point de feux, l'été n'a point de glaces. Toujours transir, toujours brûler. Toujours écouter, toujours subir. Toujours exécuter ensuite la danse des œufs, en tremblant d'en casser quelques-unes, soit avec le pied de l'éloge, soit avec celui du blâme, quand ils auraient envie de trépigner des deux pieds sur cet amas d'œufs de chats-huants et de dindons, sans grand danger pour les œufs des rossignols, tant ils sont rares aujourd'hui. . . . Et ne pouvoir enfin suspendre aux saules du fleuve de Babylon leur plume fatiguée, et s'asseoir sur la rive et pleurer à loisir ! ”

This passage voices piquantly enough Berlioz's thoughts about the work he had undertaken. We feel at the outset the shiver of the hyper-sensitive man who has to listen to music *ad nauseam*. Elsewhere he tells us bitterly that he is expected to be entertaining about stuff which has bored him to tears; with jaded faculties he is to judge keenly and in detail some new work that flies past him and is gone. He measures out praise and blame, and perhaps does with them the opposite to what he intended. He makes enemies; he gives them as good as he gets, but it is all strain, waste of time, and his music is waiting! The Romantic pose at the end of the passage quoted is a true one, despite the grimace of self-mockery. He was, after all, an exile in this country of criticism. Its language came to him with difficulty; voices from his native land of music were always calling. And he was the only composer of power in the France of his day. It is the essence of exasperation, that wry-faced metaphor about the eggs. Why not stamp on them all, those of screech-owls and nightingales alike?

It is cheering, though, to think of the fun he got out of his exasperations. His scorn had an immense range. Merciless as it could be, for example against Cherubini, often it passed into an amused tolerance not far from charity. That standing butt, the public, is hardly to be reckoned among Berlioz's aversions. Abroad, it nearly always has the *beau rôle*; its type is that simple, enthusiastic Hungarian who rushed up to him after the “ Rakoczy ” March had been given in Pesth. Even the Parisian public could be a source of gentle amusement, good for his feuilletons. There was the man who came to him during an interval and asked whether the ironic Amen chorus in *Faust* was meant to be serious or not. There was the lady he heard of who was not good at reading music in the flat keys. Importuned by a shopman on behalf of a taking piece in four flats, she decided to buy it, confessing that when there were more than two in the signature she scratched them out. Pre-eminent among these stories is the pre-

posterous yarn about the country amateur who came to town in order to try an "orgue mélodeum d'Alexandre," an instrument blown with foot-bellows like an American organ. Never suspecting this last fact, the amateur sits down at one of them and lets his fingers scamper over the keys :

" Il est étonné de ne rien entendre d'abord, mais presque aussitôt son attention est attirée par le petit bruit sec du mécanisme cli, cla, pic, pac, tong, ting; rien de plus. Il redouble d'énergie en attaquant les touches : cli, cla, pic, pac, tong, ting, toujours. ' C'est à ne pas croire,' dit-il, ' c'est ridicule! comment ferait on entendre ce misérable instrument dans une église, si petite qu'on la suppose? Voilà pourtant jusqu'où s'étend l'audace de la réclame!' Then his wrath falls on the inventor : ' Vos prétendues orgues, que j'ai fort heureusement essayées moi-même, sont inférieures aux plus mesquines épinettes du siècle dernier, et n'ont littéralement aucun son; non, monsieur, aucun son. Je ne suis ni sourd ni sot. Bonjour! ' "

This is deliciously told; its quiet, neat strokes are inimitably French. Molière, surely, would have liked the story; he would have worked it into a new *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, had he revisited the earth in Berlioz's day.

On the breeze of a ridicule so good-humoured we are carried through *Les Grotesques* and much of *Les Soirées d'orchestre* without boredom. There are paltry stories, and ill-natured ones, but the writer's charity is mainly in the ascendant. This is so while he flits round the subject of the public, the world of amateurs and hearers of music who drift with the vicissitudes of the "seasons," on which he has a most amusing article. In Paris the operatic season—of course no other counted—was apparently, round the 'fifties of last century, a breathless affair of two or three months, at most, at the beginning of the year. Then over the Channel went the host of virtuosi, full of joy at the thought of meeting again the faithful English public. Italian singers, French, Belgian, German, Bohemian, Hungarian, Swedish, and (mark the order) English singers, they were sure of their welcome once they were at all known. You could count on them as you could on the swallows. No hisses, no theatre riots, as there might be in Paris. And with a neat quotation Berlioz gets home his dig at us: Le public anglais, ce modèle de fidélité, qui toujours les accueille, toujours les applaudit, toujours les admire,

Sans remarquer des ans l'irréparable outrage.

On the subject of virtuosi Berlioz's good humour soon runs dry.

We have reached, in fact, one of his major aversions. Great instrumentalists are as a rule exempt from his scorn. The fondness of his travelled memory for fine orchestral players is indeed touching. At the Beethoven Festival at Bonn in 1845, for example, he summons in imagination this oboist from London, that double bass player from Italy, these others from Paris, to improve the band actually there. But with vocalists it is another story. For the soloist most in vogue in his day, the florid singer of the Rossinian and neo-Rossinian type of opera, his scorn was inveterate and unbounded. This singing wounded that deep and delicate classical element in his nature, fostered, as we have said, originally by Virgil and Gluck. He could praise Mme. Viardot, in *Orfeo*, unreservedly. But music that swamped the drama in meaningless vocal flourishes, that degraded the orchestra into a guitar peppered with crude brass, cymbals and big drum—such music, and singers who revelled in it, were anathema to him. Salutory as this wrath was in its time, and in harmony with Wagner's reforms, it sprang partly from mere ignorance. Berlioz was loath to admit that there could be musical expressiveness in coloratura writing of any kind. For him, not only had most of Rossini's music but much of the best of Handel, Bach and Mozart been written in vain. In this matter he was as arbitrary as in other matters any pedant of the Conservatoire whom he plied with whips of scorn in his *Mémoires*. Inartistic virtuosity, however, is a hydra of such virulence, and has devastated so many periods of musical history, that we can be grateful, on the whole, for Berlioz's onslaughts. In book after book he returns to the charge; never does he tire of baiting the weaknesses of "tenors" and prima donnas. Were he alive now, he could do valiant work, not so much, of course, against the more chastened ways of the tribe to-day, as against the outbreaks of senseless boosting in parts of the Press. Boosting, indeed, is the theme of one of his best-known articles, in *Les Soirées d'orchestre*; that on the visit of Jenny Lind to America under the escort of Mr. Barnum. He piles up a gorgeous extravaganza, in which drolleries hard to resist go side by side with bad lapses of taste. To welcome the diva, America makes a national festival. High and low throng the harbour to see her land. Drawn by uncontrollable impulse, the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea follow the ship in myriads. On shore, some devotees fling themselves under the wheels of her chariot. Others take their places in the opera house and hear her first song. And then, all other joys of life having no further savour for them, they rise; they draw—not pistols, the noise of shots might displease her—but daggers, and, calling her name, stab themselves romantically to the heart.

Noisy high-wrought satire of this sort is not much in favour to-day; but though Berlioz's imagination in these flights loses its quality,

his enormous gusto carries him through. So intimately did this particular scorn pervade his mind that once it intrudes on a very pleasant description of an expedition on foot in the Vosges. He paints the upland scene with true and modest touches; we feel his delight in rest and free spaces, after theatres and concert-rooms; we remember he was a Dauphinois, a born mountaineer. A lark's song is described; the result is not much, beside Shelley, but it is passable. Then, suddenly, his old mania snatches his thoughts away:

"Ne me parlez pas de votre classique rossignol, *Philomela sub umbra*, à qui il faut pour salles de concert des bocages fleuris et sonores, qui chante la nuit pour se faire remarquer, qui regarde si on l'écoute, qui toujours vise à l'effet dans ses pompeuses cavatines avec trilles et roulades, qui singe par certains accents l'expression d'une douleur qu'elle ne ressent pas. . . . C'est un vrai ténor à cent mille francs d'appointements."

The nightingale, of course, has been over-celebrated; and some of us may raise a laugh at seeing the tables so fiercely turned on her. Yet a passage which not only changes her sex but turns her gratuitously into a prig and a hypocrite betrays again the lack of taste to which Berlioz the Romantic was prone, doubly so when hot on the trail of a pet aversion.

From the well-known *Traité d'instrumentation* we know his grandiose ideals for the orchestra. A maximum of four hundred and sixty-seven players, representing every instrumental possibility of his time; carefully proportioned, each department harmonically complete, the whole existing not, as he insistently tells us, for noise, but for varied sonority of every kind. This is the measure of his reaction against the slovenly orchestral habits of his day; aversions, once again, blaze out on every few pages of the *Traité*. The controlling idea of *Les Soirées d'orchestre* is indeed too preposterous to be used nowadays even in satire. The *Soirées* are a collection of stories, or sketches, retailed to each other by members of an orchestra during the performance of "un opéra français (ou italien) très plat." The conductor is acquiescent; apart from a few strings, a trombone or so, and the indispensable big drum, the players have apparently all the leisure they want. The Rossinian big drum may, indeed, head the list of Berlioz's orchestral aversions. Its devastating thuds, the scrape of its attendant cymbals, swamping the rest of the orchestra, draws from him a fury of invective about "dance music fit for monkeys, fit to accompany the feats of mountebanks and swallowers of swords and serpents." Indeed he was the first to use this dangerous instrument imaginatively. Compare the treatment of the big drum in the overture to *William Tell* with its marvellous use in the "Bakoczy" March—the indescribable thrill of the

pianissimo thuds that din softly through the crescendo to its final climax. Think, too, of the pregnant dictum with which Berlioz sums up its use in such climaxes "to redouble little by little the force of a lofty rhythm already established." Of the brass too, this Columbus of the orchestra has fierce things to say. He knows of no composer who has not at some time degraded the noble trumpet. (Did his idol Beethoven escape this condemnation, we wonder, in the passages where his trumpets bark out rapid reiterated tonics or dominants?) He is down in a flash on the evil which for long had crippled the string band—the fact that violas were played by incompetent violinists and could never have important melodic passages to themselves. On lazy habits such as the insufficiently rapid tremolo he has no mercy. From indignations of this kind sprang the *Traité*, a miracle of instinctive invention in sound, and systematic for all its fire.

What of the results he himself drew from his imagined apparatus, when with pain and grief and expense he got something like it to come together in a concert hall? Too often, disappointing. The musical ideas were not always worthy of the apparatus; partly because of their persistent literary or pictorial bias, partly because of his scorn for purely musical science, above all for counterpoint. If he raged at pedants—these, the greatest of his aversions—we can sympathise for a while. It is exasperating when you have made a new modulation, and pleaded its beauty of sound, its adroit management, for a Cherubini to rap his desk and say "That is not the question! This modulation is prohibited, therefore it must not be used." But for such as Berlioz the pedant has an answer to be reckoned with; it goes something like this: "I may be uninspired, but I follow methods which have served great predecessors. They, like me, did not disdain hard, abstract technical study. I use their methods, I aim for certain effects, and I get them. You scorn my rules, you clutch at images, stories, literature and your array of instruments. In happy moments your idea goes up like a rocket. In others—it comes down like the stick."

We have now given some picture of the attitude of Berlioz the critic to the musical world of his day, and some impression of the volcanic genius, the passionate lover of musical sounds, who was often wilfully ignorant of the laws that govern their weaving; the musician who broke into the frontiers of literature to snatch from it virtue that might compensate for this ignorance. After all, he often expressed himself in his music; his own delicacy is there, in the *Ballet des Sylphes*, his gaiety in a Roman carnival, his *diable au corps* in an orgy of demons, or whatever else, while in that mood, he may choose to call the din.

The conflagration died down, in his last days, to bitterest ashes.

Listen to this address to a friend, written on a night when winds howled round his house :

"*Quel crescendo! Ululate venti! Quel forte! Ingemuit alta domus. Sa voix se perd. Ma cheminée resonance sourdement comme un tuyau d'orgue de soixante-quatre pieds. Je n'ai jamais pu résister a ces bruits ossianiques; ils me brisent le cœur, me donnent envie de mourir. Ils me disent que tout passe, que l'espace et le temps absorbent beauté, jeunesse, amour, gloire et génie; que la vie humaine n'est rien, la mort pas davantage. . . . Il n'y a ni grand ni petit, ni beau ni laid, l'infini est indifférent, l'indifférence est infinie.*"

"Signifying nothing": he is in the very depths. No pessimist of his day but Leopardi got so low: Chateaubriand's René does not carry such bitter conviction; Alfred de Vigny had at any rate stoicism to hold up his despair. Many causes contributed to his state of mind; private sorrows; the nervous strain of a lifetime taking its revenge; his failure to win the unmusical Paris of the Second Empire. There were perhaps two other causes, which we suggest; first, that unresolved discord of his whole life, the clash between music and literature, both imperfectly mastered: second, the attitude of mind from which sprang his aversions, a scorn less and less controlled which in the end shrivelled up the whole of his world.

Our next article will lift him from these depths and study his musical enthusiasms, above all his opinions on Beethoven and Gluck, which make the volume *A travers chants* his most valuable contribution to criticism.

W. WRIGHT ROBERTS.

BOITO AND HIS TWO OPERAS

"The work I dare not name." It was in such terms that Verdi no less than forty years ago reverently referred to *Nerone*—the incomplete opera of his friend and collaborator Arrigo Boito. The work so jealously guarded by its creator during his lifetime, having at last been given to an expectant world, has met with less reverent treatment at the hands of the critics, and has already—so authoritative voices loudly proclaim—been consigned to oblivion.

The fact that Boito is almost always lacking in power, spontaneity and rich vitality may partly account for this lack of appreciation. His music is indeed almost subdued in mood and expression as that of Debussy, though it is generally lacking in the gorgeous imaginative power of the Frenchman. His orchestra is generally singularly passionless, even bloodless, his music seems evoked by the spirit of weariness, but there are in it, nevertheless, moments of wistful spirituality and a peculiarly touching sincerity that are particularly lovely and haunting.

Though Boito is immeasurably inferior in most respects to his great contemporary rivals in operatic art, Bizet, Verdi and Wagner, it may, nevertheless, be doubted whether any of them has succeeded in creating a figure of such spiritual depth and luminous and ethereal beauty as that of the Christian martyr Fanuel in *Nerone*. Even Parsifal seems to me crude, to say the least, in comparison. And apart from a few odd moments in which vigour is required and is, as is generally the case with Boito, entirely lacking, there is scarcely a flaw in this singularly perfect creation.

Yet in this composer we almost always miss the high spirits vital warmth and open-air exuberance of a Bizet or a Verdi. When his music attempts to be less cerebral and more frankly sensual, it is generally so utterly lacking in spontaneity that it becomes peculiarly repulsive in its suggestion of a stifling, oppressive, soul-destroying voluptuousness. There is, indeed, in Boito's work a poverty of genuine sensuality absolutely undreamt of in Italian operatic music.

It is owing to this lack of power that Boito cannot rank amongst the greatest operatic composers of his age. He himself seems to have realised the whole extent of his impotence and in moments of deep discouragement and sombre resignation to have fancied himself

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It is owing to this lack of power that Boito cannot rank amongst the greatest operatic composers of his age. He himself seems to have realised the whole extent of his impotence and in moments of deep discouragement and sombre resignation to have fancied himself

utterly devoid of genius. An innate distrust of his own ability, joined to a super-sensitive and pitifully nervous temperament, would, indeed, at the critical moment overthrow his faith in the value of his work and utterly paralyse his creative power. How he had laboured to achieve perfection, without ever achieving it! Like the climber in an ancient myth who sets out to scale a lofty peak, at the summit of which stands a cup of nectar, he had heroically surmounted a thousand obstacles and clutched eagerly at the coveted goblet, filled to the brim with the life-giving wine of inspiration, but in the act of raising it to his lips his trembling hand had spilt its contents on the ground. Is there a fate more pitiful? An Italian critic declares that in Boito's art it seems at certain moments as though "the sweep of the bow would describe a curve soaring to heaven, proud and confident, and then the bow, instead, falls short, stifled, and the sublime heavenward flight resolves into an anxious fluttering and panting." He finally lost all belief in his work. Well might he cry aloud in an agony of impotent despair: "In me everything is doubt and fear."

Almost every page of the scores of *Mefistofele* and *Nerone* bears witness to this inner strife. No wonder the hapless composer fancied everything had been given him only by halves. No wonder he increasingly detested the feverish excitement of the art of creation for fear of the strain accompanying it and the exhaustion following it. There is often a pitiful lack of sincerity and dignity in his morbid delight at never having been wholly possessed by his musical emotions—a delight that would fill us with contempt did we not feel the underlying agony.

Boito was, indeed, too complete a critic to be a creator. Scarcely ever did he fling prudence and caution to the winds and simply let himself go. Verdi was probably thinking of him when he declared that too much reflection drowned inspiration, and Boito had, indeed, ended by becoming incapable of spontaneous invention and finally by making a virtue of his necessity, even though at times he utterly despised himself for doing so. Nevertheless, the little he has left us is that of an artist in the highest and most complete sense of the word.

The friendship with Verdi was, as far as Boito was concerned, a great boon and a great misfortune. It increased, to an almost intolerable degree, the idea of his inferiority and artistic mediocrity. The man who had begun by experiencing the strongest antagonism towards the crude and violent composer of *Il Trovatore*, ended by writing his libretti and consecrating to the aged maestro what he himself termed a "voluntary servitude," more complete even than that of Seroff or Cornelius to Wagner.

But though Boito's devotion to Verdi verged on idolatry, in his inmost heart there was, nevertheless, at times a feeling closely akin to bitterness which finds utterance in the poignant words: "I must dwindle so that he may grow." Even all the fervour of his friendship for Verdi could not entirely blind him to the fact that he was sacrificing his own talents on the altar of Verdi's genius. Occasionally he felt there was a certain lack of nobility in Verdi's cool acceptance of the unprecedented sacrifice of twenty years of his life—for which the world is, however, more grateful to him than for his own operas. Nevertheless, at rare moments the aged maestro, despairing of further creative activity, half-heartedly reproached himself for so completely monopolising his friend and diverting his attention from his own work. But ultimately, with the imperious egotism of genius, he regarded Boito's voluntary servitude as in the ordinary course of nature.

It was probably mainly owing to Boito's innate and exaggerated modesty that the collaboration between Verdi and him was so wonderfully complete and harmonious. When two men of genius became close friends and collaborators, one of them, preferably the less gifted, must ultimately subordinate himself to the other, as for instance, Schiller, quite justifiably, did to Goethe, or Shelley, in one of his absurd fits of self-depreciation, to Byron. Otherwise, sooner or later, the stellar friendship will dissolve into thin air to the discordant accompaniment of mocking shouts and frantic imprecations, as was the case with Nietzsche and Wagner.

There is little doubt that the meeting with Boito was, in many respects, the turning-point in Verdi's career, and it is possible, though, of course, by no means certain, that without his assistance the great composer's genius would not have reached its glorious crowning phase. In any case the old maestro speedily realised that there was something in this "Italo-Wagnerian maestrino" (as Boito was contemptuously called) that few of his contemporaries possessed—and perhaps he himself at that time least of all—namely, a certain spiritual distinction and a whole-hearted devotion to the highest ideals of art. He also began to realise the true value and significance of *Mefistofele*, which he had once decried as empty and bombastic, and to recognise that it was an extraordinarily daring attempt on the part of a young and untried composer, at a time when the worst examples surrounded him, to regenerate Italian opera and substitute the music-drama for the old-fashioned meaningless pot-pourri of more or less pretty tunes.

The influence of *Mefistofele* may be traced in many scenes of *Otello* and even *Falstaff*, whilst, on the other hand, certain scenes in *Nerone* (Rubria's "Ave Maria," for instance) betray the influence

of Verdi, particularly of the Verdi of *Otello*. As a matter of fact, the two musicians collaborated so fully that they absorbed each other's ideas. Boito's sardonic mocking friend, infinitely more real than Gounod's witty devil, has a great deal in common with Jago, and we may even venture to assert that his superb monologue, "I am the Spirit that denies," if less elemental and dramatically effective, surpasses the Credo of Jago in its weird suggestion of diabolical malevolence. Moreover, certain moments in Falstaff's Honour solo, perhaps the least inspired moments in a wonderfully inspired work, betray the influence of Boito.

Unfortunately Boito (who, judging from his booklet of verses "*Il Re Orso*," had a sneaking fondness for sensationalism and claptrap) was too much dominated by the idea that Verdi above all required strong and powerful (or rather melodramatic) situations, and in endeavouring to provide him with them, he ended by doing violence to his own nature, thereby offending both his own taste and that of others. Thus the famous actor, Tommaso Salvini, bluntly informed Verdi that his Iago was not Shakespeare's Iago at all. "You, Verdi," he exclaimed indignantly, "have made him a melodramatic villain with his Credos and his outcry of '*Ecco il leone*'" (for both of which Boito was responsible). These two deplorable lapses served to revive the element of hollow theatricality and empty bombast that Verdi could never entirely discard.

Boito does not, indeed, seem to have realised how immeasurably the old maestro had gained in subtlety and refinement since the beginning of their friendship and that he was now at his best in situations requiring not only depth of feeling and emotional sincerity, but also delicacy and restraint, and—strange to say—at his worst in the musical delineation of violent and melodramatic scenes. This partial lack of vision on the part of Boito must not, however, blind us to the fact that he had on the whole exercised a wonderfully refining and sublimating influence on Verdi's somewhat crude and coarse genius.

Boito's delicate talent could not fully develop itself as long as Verdi lived, but once the aged maestro—the personification of Boito's own ideal of triumphant vitality and Olympian serenity—was dead, bearing away with him an enormous amount of light and vital warmth, his bereaved friend was at last at liberty to devote himself whole-heartedly to his own work, and it would be idle to pretend that—though his self-distrust was greater than ever—he had not profited enormously from the long association with Verdi.

Nerone is, indeed, a considerable advance on *Mefistofele*, even though the latter was a tremendously ambitious—and not altogether unsuccessful—attempt to embrace the whole of Goethe's profound

world philosophy. Those who fail to recognise this development of Boito's genius seem to me to be singularly lacking in discernment. Not only is the balance between poetry and music much more perfect in *Nerone*, but there is also less monotony and more sureness of touch than in the early work. *Nerone* is more of an opera and less of a cantata, more music of the heart and less music of the head, and—above all—more the work of a musician and less that of a poet. In *Nerone* there is, moreover, a pathos of wistful spirituality for which—apart from a phrase or two of Margaret's—we search in vain in *Mefistofele*.

Finally, though Italian critics assert that Boito's music resembles that of nobody else, *Mefistofele* simply swarms with reminiscences—an accusation that cannot, however, be levelled against *Nerone*. In the early opera several of the most exquisite phrases are palpably second-hand articles. Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner are successively laid under contribution—yet with a discretion and sureness of judgment that are not wholly discreditable to Boito's taste. In one extraordinary case the result of his borrowing is perhaps even greater than the superb original. I am referring to the sweet and wistful melody that characterises the purity and innocence of Margaret—and that is repeatedly heard at the beginning of the Garden Scene. Well, it has been taken almost bodily from one of the loveliest passages of the andante of Mozart's "Prague" Symphony. Strange to say, this most obvious of all Boito's borrowings has escaped the notice of the most faultfinding of his critics.

I do not, however, for one instant mean to assert that *Mefistofele* is in any sense a work of inferior value. It is, indeed, full of picturesque and poignant strokes (the tragic beauty of Margaret's death lingers in the memory) and at its best it is undoubtedly on the same plane of achievement as *Nerone*. Saint-Saëns considered the magnificent Prologue in Heaven one of the miracles of modern music—and he was a none too lenient judge of Italian opera. The marvellous song of deliverance, with its soaring melody, is, indeed, the very consummation of mystical ecstasy and was the delight of Boito himself, who was never weary, however, of referring contemptuously to his early opera as an old guitar.

It has been repeatedly asserted that Boito's power of dramatic characterisation is still more limited and rudimentary in *Nerone* than in *Mefistofele*. We may frankly admit that characterisation was never Boito's strong point, but in *Nerone* most of his characters seem to have gained in depth and humanity, and his psychological sense to have become more subtle and delicate. In *Mefistofele* the protagonist and Margaret are at moments both powerful and affecting creations,

but there are also times when they seem to lose all individuality and verge on the inane. And as for Faust, his striving spirit is never realised and anything more insipid and colourless than his music can scarcely be imagined. Boito certainly did make an abject mess of this Faust, and Mr. Newman did well to speak in terms of withering contempt of his "lame, blind and halt melodies" (though such terms when applied to Boito's music as a whole savour somewhat of exaggeration).

Such scathing condemnation can scarcely be meted out to the characters of *Nerone*—the Emperor himself excepted. We readily admit that Nero is a less powerful creation than Mephistopheles, but, on the other hand, the Vestal virgin Rubria and Fanuel—whom Boito sought to endow with the steadfastness and nobility of soul of a St. Peter—are far more luminous and perfect creations than any in the early opera. This evidently signifies that—though Boito was no longer so skilful in depicting the power of evil and the lust of destruction—he had acquired a far deeper understanding of the very essence of genuine spiritual beauty and soul-consuming faith.

Nerone, indeed, in spite of its excessive striving after effect, in spite of its gorgeous processions—and more empty bombastic music could scarcely be imagined—is, on the whole, a nobler work than *Mefistofele*—a work more overflowing with human and divine tenderness. When Fanuel, steadfast in his faith, goes out to meet his fate, the presence of a spirit raising him above adversity and death is revealed with altogether thrilling power in the music; and as we feel that all earthly desires, all worldly ambitions, are utterly consumed in the glowing flame of this burning faith, we at last realise that Boito has here attained the very summit of art.

And again, when Rubria dies in the arms of Fanuel in the underground vault, the flames of this terrible conflagration casting a lurid glow on her pale face, the spirit of tragedy hovers above the scene. It is a music that comes from the very depths of the human heart, a music full of mystic beauty and unspeakable tenderness, full of the piercing eloquence of unspoken words, of sweet desires subdued and mellowed by the approach of death. It is this scene, wholly lacking in the lurking sensuality of a Puccinian death-scene, which is Boito's lasting title to fame, and once heard it can never be forgotten.

The greatest obstacle in the way of the production of Boito's operas is not so much their truly exorbitant demands on the stage carpenter as their prolix and—in the case of *Mefistofele* in particular—inherent libretti with their amazing lack of one continuous thread of interest. This is all the more astonishing, as Boito had enormously improved the standard of the libretto and had, indeed, written, for others at least, libretti that are in themselves almost perfect works

of art. Yet in both *Mefistofele* and *Nerone* the protagonist who dominates the stage during the first acts sinks into the background towards the end of the drama, and Boito, in his frantic desire to increase his importance, introduces various scenes into his work that have very little to do with the main plot and that are really pure waste of time and space. Verdi did that in *Aida*, but he at least knew how to do it, even though crudely, with the utmost theatrical effect.

In order to facilitate the production of Boito's interminable operas, they must—I see no alternative—be ruthlessly cut. Why should not the Witches' Sabbath in *Mefistofele* (teeming as it does with clumsy reminiscences from the "Rienzi" and Liszt's "Dante" Symphony and vastly inferior to the truly exquisite Classical Sabbath, with its charming Grecian music and quaint old-fashioned flavour) share the fate of Gounod's Walpurgis Night? Why should not Nero himself—insufferably tedious as he is—assume the modest proportions of a background figure, such as Cymbeline in Shakespeare's tragedy of that name? The greater part of his music is simply empty and meretricious and, moreover, quite superfluous. As it is, we are weary of him before the end of the second act. He strikes us as being a singularly bloodless buffoon, sentimental and lascivious into the bargain, and the psychological influences that prompt him are not in the least clear. There are two striking moments in his part—moments that are admirably and thrillingly expressed in the music: his first appearance in a frenzy of terror bearing with him the ashes of his murdered mother, and subsequently his frantic command to fling the Christians to the lions. His rôle should be limited to these two appearances.

The drama as a whole would gain thereby immeasurably, so loosely connected and redundant are the scenes of the libretti Boito was in the habit of concocting for himself. The opera would then resolve itself into a stirring and profoundly moving story of the persecution of the Christians during the reign of Nero, and it is truly lamentable to think that these touching and exquisite scenes should fall a prey to oblivion, owing to the absurd length and lack of proportion of the original work—defects that render a performance, at least in England almost a practical impossibility. Italian critics may declare that we are laying sacrilegious hands on a masterpiece, but I do not see why Boito should be spared the treatment meted out to an infinitely greater musician, Wagner, and with infinitely less justification.

These operas of Boito are chiefly remarkable for their uncanny power of suggesting the most intimate and secret psychical states. Though occasionally slightly lacking in individuality, they, neverthe-

less, contain scenes that are full of beauty and inspiration. It would be truly deplorable to repeat the error of the majority of Boito's critics who regard his work as either lacking in native inspiration and scarcely ever rising above the mediocre, or as the crowning achievement of Italian operatic art. It is neither one nor the other, and, though its historical importance is undoubtedly greater than its artistic value, it is undeniably the work of a man who at least never followed the road of least resistance and who was, apart from Verdi, probably the most intriguing and arresting personality in modern Italian music.

J. W. KLEIN.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL

WHILE the custom of the school children in singing carols—and their stock-in-trade consists, as a rule, of one solitary example in old Nahum Tate's hymn "While Shepherds Watched"—outside the area gate or on the doorstep, is not one to be encouraged, there is no reason why a pleasing and ancient custom should be altogether suppressed in these ultra-modern days.

In some parts of Yorkshire, the youngsters still go round with their "milly-boxes," a corruption of my Lady's box, in honour of the Virgin Mother: and they are usually decorated with some sort of representation of the crib, the Holy Babe in the manger. But the waits were, strictly speaking, instrumentalists and not vocalists, although there was generally a youth in the company who sang solos. Then came the men who were wont in the olden days to travel the countryside with broadsheets, early examples of printing, often illustrated with rough woodcuts, containing the words of some of the old carols of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Of the printers of these, one survived till as late as 1850, in Cantanch, whose press was in Seven Dials; and there was a still later printer of these curious productions in Birmingham. Two or three examples have come down to us in a carol for S. Stephen's Day, and one for the feast of S. John the Evangelist.

As the season of Yule coincided with the winter solstice, the festival of Christmas carries on the pagan feasts customary at this time and observed with much feasting and merriment by both Latins and Teutons. The carols were not confined to Christmas; but each season, such as summer and winter, had its special songs; and these were also sung at Easter and the Ascension, two seasons, as well as the Harvest Thanksgiving, which offer good opportunities for revival at the present day.

It would seem that carols were first introduced as interludes during the intervals of the Mystery plays. Some of these have come down to us in the Coventry plays, of which the "Cherry Tree Carol"—beginning "Joseph was an Old Man" was one, and founded upon an actual scene in the play. In the book of the words is often a stage direction, such as "the first and the last shepherd to sing here." There is, in that interesting miscellany of ancient customs, Chambers' "Book of Days," a recipe for the making of the Wassail bowl. This is the same, no doubt, as the "Gossip bowl" mentioned by

Shakespeare in his "Midsummer Night's Dream." The spices, which are to be simmered in a little water and afterwards strained, are cardamons, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger, cinnamon and coriander seed. Then to some bottles of port or madeira, are added some crushed loaf sugar, with the spices and beaten eggs to the number of six. The whole is heated with some roasted apples till it froths up.

The word "wassail" is derived from the Saxon "Wass hail," which means "to your good health." One of the oldest Wassail songs comes from Gloucestershire; and the loving cup of the city banquet, handed round at the end of the feast, is a survival of the Wassail bowl which, by the way, was the drink partaken of in Scotland at the merry-making heralding the new year.

The earliest printed book of carols is that by Wynkyn de Worde, the famous successor of Caxton, in 1521. This contains the "Boar's Head Carol," still sung at Oxford. The most notable collections of the old examples are by Sandys, Hook, Sylvester, and, at a later date, by A. H. Bullen, the authority on Elizabethan literature. Some of them have been modernised, of which a typical example is the one beginning "Lully, lulla, Thou little tiny Child!"

Fortunately, we have several collections for modern use, of the old carol. These are the "Cowley Carol Book," edited by that admirable authority, Dr. G. R. Woodward, and also his "Cambridge Book." The first of these contains several most quaint and interesting examples from a rare Swedish book, called "Piae Cantiones" (of which there are only two known copies extant, one in the British Museum and the other in the Library of the Plainsong Society). In it are to be found some of the early fourteenth and fifteenth century carols, full of charm and character. The "Cambridge Book" is noteworthy for its excellent words, truly in the spirit of the original, set to appropriate melodies and harmonised, for the most part by Dr. Charles Wood. We have here a new tune to the old hymn of Täte's, in a composition by Nicholas Herman (of the seventeenth century) and it has Bach's harmonies to make it distinctive. There is also the German original of the folk tune that is usually known here as the Scottish air, "John Anderson."

Two books by Dr. Dearmer and Martin Shaw—the "English Carol Book"—is another admirable compilation in which several genuine old English Christmas songs are given with eminently suitable accompaniments, with some from France and Russia.

The old custom of accompanying carols with a quartet of wind instruments is very worthy of imitation and the church music of early days was provided in this way before organs became general.

Among purely modern settings I have met one particularly charming example in a "Cradle Song of the Virgin," by Ernest Halsey.

But one wants to get quite away from the usual type of hymn tune and the chromatic harmonies, which soon become wearisome. In the collections thus briefly described, those who go a-carolling as well as those who arrange services in church—or in the concert hall as well, for that matter—will find plenty of good material from the purely devotional to the more secular songs which are appropriate to this season of goodwill. By their use, the appeal of the Babe of Bethlehem, “with tiny hand outstretched,” as one of the old carols puts it, will be realised to the full by both wise and unlearned.

WAKELING W. DRY.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS OF THE QUARTER

This list is representative, not complete. H.M.V.—The Gramophone Company
Col.—Columbia; Voc.—Vocalion.

- Bach.** “Blessing, Honour and Wisdom.” Motet. Choir of B.N.O.C., conducted by Albert Coates. [H.M.V. D. 1036.]
- Balakirew.** Fourth Mazurka. Sapellnikoff. [Voc. A. 0228.]
- Beethoven.** Quartet in A minor (Op. 132). Lener quartet. [Col. L. 1672-6.]
- Bruch.** Concerto in G minor. A. Sammons, with Symph. Orch., under Sir H. Harty. [Col. L. 1680-3.]
- Castelnuovo-Tedesco.** Capitan Fracassa. Adila Fachiri. [Voc. K. 05198.]
- Chopin.** Nocturne, D flat, Etude F minor, Valse C sharp major. Pachmann. [H.M.V. DB. 800.]
- Chopin.** Ballade in A flat. York Bowen. [Voc. X. 9666.]
- Chopin.** Valse Brillante Op. 18. Sapellnikoff. [Voc. B. 3120.]
- Debussy.** Reverie. Adila Fachiri. [Voc. K. 05198.]
- Elgar.** Empire March. Wireless Symph. Orch., under Percy Pitt. [Col. 9059.]
- Elgar.** Symphony in E flat. R.A.H. Orch., conducted by composer. [H.M.V. D. 1013-1017.]
- Granados.** Goyescas, Intermezzo and Spanish Dance No. 1. Mod. Chamb. Orch. Stanley Chapple. [Voc. K. 05199.]
- Grieg.** Violin Sonata in G major. A. Sammons and W. Murdoch. [Col. L. 1661-3.]
- Haydn.** “Surprise” Symphony NQHO and Sir H. Wood. [Col. L. 1668-9.]
- Holst.** St. Paul’s Suite, Str. Orch., cond. by composer. [Col. L. 1648-9.]
- Holst.** Country Song. No. 1. Op. 22. Mod. Chamb. Orch. Stanley Chapple. [Voc. K. 05194.]
- Jarnesfeldt.** Preludium. NQHO and Sir H. Wood. [Col. L. 1670.]
- Liszt.** No. 2 of Concert Studies. Sapellnikoff. [Voc. A. 0228.]
- Maliplero.** La Cimarosiana, Mod. Chamb. Orch. Stanley Chapple. [Voc. K. 05194.]
- Mendelssohn.** Nocturne from Midsummer Night’s Dream R.A.H. Orch., conducted by Sir Landon Ronald. [H.M.V. D. 1034.] Also, Philh. Orch. and Bruno Walter. [Col. L. 1651.]
- Morley.** “Now is the month of Maying.” English Singers. [H.M.V. E. 405.]
- Mozart.** Quartet in D minor. Kutcher quartet. [Voc. K. 05190-05193.]
- Mozart.** Concerto No. 3, in G Jelly d’Aranyi. [Voc. A. 0242-0244.]
- Schubert.** Quartet-Satz in C minor. London Str. Quartet. [Col. L. 1679.]
- Schumann.** Pf. 5tet, E flat, O. Gabrilowitsch and Flonzaley quartet. [H.M.V. D.B. 780-1.]
- Tchaikovsky.** Symphony No. 4. R.A.H. Orch., conducted by Sir Landon Ronald. [H.M.V. D. 1037-1041.]
- Vaughan Williams** (arr.) A Farmer’s Son. English singers. [H.M.V. E. 405.]
- Vaughan Williams.** Suite, Old King Cole. Aeol. Orch., conducted by composer. [Voc. A. 0247-8.]
- Wagner.** Siegfried Idyll. The Reval Philh. Orch. and Bruno Walter. [Col. L. 1653-4.]
- Weber.** Overture to Oberon. NQHO and Sir H. Wood. [Col. L. 1677.]

Shakespeare in his "Midsummer Night's Dream." The spices, which are to be simmered in a little water and afterwards strained, are cardamons, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger, cinnamon and coriander seed. Then to some bottles of port or madeira, are added some crushed loaf sugar, with the spices and beaten eggs to the number of six. The whole is heated with some roasted apples till it froths up.

The word "wassail" is derived from the Saxon "Wass hail," which means "to your good health." One of the oldest Wassail songs comes from Gloucestershire; and the loving cup of the city banquet, handed round at the end of the feast, is a survival of the Wassail bowl which, by the way, was the drink partaken of in Scotland at the merry-making heralding the new year.

The earliest printed book of carols is that by Wynkyn de Worde, the famous successor of Caxton, in 1521. This contains the "Boar's Head Carol," still sung at Oxford. The most notable collections of the old examples are by Sandys, Hook, Sylvester, and, at a later date, by A. H. Bullen, the authority on Elizabethan literature. Some of them have been modernised, of which a typical example is the one beginning "Lully, lulla, Thou little tiny Child!"

Fortunately, we have several collections for modern use, of the old carol. These are the "Cowley Carol Book," edited by that admirable authority, Dr. G. R. Woodward, and also his "Cambridge Book." The first of these contains several most quaint and interesting examples from a rare Swedish book, called "Piae Cantiones" (of which there are only two known copies extant, one in the British Museum and the other in the Library of the Plainsong Society). In it are to be found some of the early fourteenth and fifteenth century carols, full of charm and character. The "Cambridge Book" is noteworthy for its excellent words, truly in the spirit of the original, set to appropriate melodies and harmonised, for the most part by Dr. Charles Wood. We have here a new tune to the old hymn of Tate's, in a composition by Nicholas Herman (of the seventeenth century) and it has Bach's harmonies to make it distinctive. There is also the German original of the folk tune that is usually known here as the Scottish air, "John Anderson."

Two books by Dr. Dearmer and Martin Shaw—the "English Carol Book"—is another admirable compilation in which several genuine old English Christmas songs are given with eminently suitable accompaniments, with some from France and Russia.

The old custom of accompanying carols with a quartet of wind instruments is very worthy of imitation and the church music of early days was provided in this way before organs became general.

Among purely modern settings I have met one particularly charming example in a "Cradle Song of the Virgin," by Ernest Halsey.

But one wants to get quite away from the usual type of hymn tune and the chromatic harmonies, which soon become wearisome. In the collections thus briefly described, those who go a-carolling as well as those who arrange services in church—or in the concert hall as well, for that matter—will find plenty of good material from the purely devotional to the more secular songs which are appropriate to this season of goodwill. By their use, the appeal of the Babe of Bethlehem, “with tiny hand outstretched,” as one of the old carols puts it, will be realised to the full by both wise and unlearned.

WAKELING W. DRY.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS OF THE QUARTER

This list is representative, not complete. H.M.V.—The Gramophone Company
Col.—Columbia; Voc.—Vocalion.

Bach. “Blessing, Honour and Wisdom.” Motet. Choir of B.N.O.C., conducted by Albert Coates. [H.M.V. D. 1036.]

Balakirew. Fourth Mazurka. Sapellnikoff. [Voc. A. 0228.]

Beethoven. Quartet in A minor (Op. 122). Lener quartet. [Col. L. 1672-6.]

Bruch. Concerto in G minor. A. Sammons, with Symph. Orch., under Sir H. Harty. [Col. L. 1690-3.]

Castellnuovo-Tedesco. Capitan Fracassa. Adila Fachiri. [Voc. K. 05198.]

Chopin. Nocturne, D flat, Etude F minor, Valse C sharp major. Pachmann. [H.M.V. D.B. 860.]

Chopin. Ballade in A flat. York Bowen. [Voc. K. 0666.]

Chopin. Valse Brillante Op. 18. Sapellnikoff. [Voc. B. 8190.]

Debussy. Reverie. Adila Fachiri. [Voc. K. 05198.]

Elgar. Empire March. Wireless Symph. Orch., under Percy Pitt. [Col. 9059.]

Elgar. Symphony in E flat. R.A.H. Orch., conducted by composer. [H.M.V. D. 1012-1017.]

Granados. Goyescas, Intermezzo and Spanish Dance No. 1. Mod. Chamb. Orch. Stanley Chapple. [Voc. K. 05199.]

Grieg. Violin Sonata in G major. A. Sammons and W. Murdoch. [Col. L. 1661-3.]

Haydn. “Surprise” Symphony NQHO and Sir H. Wood. [Col. L. 1668-9.]

Holst. St. Paul’s Suite, Str. Orch., cond. by composer. [Col. L. 1648-9.]

Holst. Country Song. No. 1. Op. 22. Mod. Chamb. Orch. Stanley Chapple. [Voc. K. 05194.]

Jarnfeldt. Preludium. NQHO and Sir H. Wood. [Col. L. 1670.]

Liszt. No. 2 of Concert Studies. Sapellnikoff. [Voc. A. 0228.]

Malpietro. La Cimarosiana, Mod. Chamb. Orch. Stanley Chapple. [Voc. K. 05194.]

Mendelssohn. Nocturne from Midsummer Night’s Dream R.A.H. Orch., conducted by Sir Landon Ronald. [H.M.V. D. 1034.] Also, Philh. Orch. and Bruno Walter. [Col. L. 1651.]

Morley. “Now is the month of Maying.” English Singers. [H.M.V. E. 405.]

Mozart. Quartet in D minor. Kutcher quartet. [Voc. K. 05190-05193.]

Mozart. Concerto No. 3, in G Jelly d’Aranyi. [Voc. A. 0242-0244.]

Schubert. Quartet-Satz in C minor. London Str. Quartet. [Col. L. 1679.]

Schumann. Pf. 5tet, E flat, O. Gabrilowitsch and Plonzalet quartet. [H.M.V. D.B. 780-1.]

Tchaikovsky. Symphony No. 4. R.A.H. Orch., conducted by Sir Landon Ronald. [H.M.V. D. 1037-1041.]

Vaughan Williams (arr.) A Farmer’s Son. English singers. [H.M.V. E. 405.]

Vaughan Williams. Suite, Old King Cole. Aeol. Orch., conducted by composer. [Voc. A. 0247-8.]

Wagner. Siegfried Idyll. The Reval Philh. Orch. and Bruno Walter. [Col. L. 1653-4.]

Weber. Overture to Oberon. NQHO and Sir H. Wood. [Col. L. 1677.]

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Richard Wagner as he lived. By W. Wallace. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübener & Co. J. Curwen & Sons. 7s. 6d.

This book, one of a "Masters of Music" series, will in these days find a ready public, and on the whole it is well that it should. But it would have been a thousand times better had Wagner known how to write about himself with candour—and best of all if, on that subject, he could have held his tongue altogether.

There is nothing of outstanding novelty in Mr. Wallace's cursive treatment of his theme. He is not an idolater of Wagner as a man—"the amazing thing is that he wrote divine music"—but he goes along with him and his chief contacts (notably Liszt, about whom there are interesting pages) through those hectic three score years and ten; the artist on the one side of him, and the man on the other.

Largely, for Mr. Wallace, "as he lived" means by no means quite as he said he did.

Amongst other challengings is that of Wagner's claim to be considered if not as a classical scholar, at least as a serious student of the Attic drama.

There seems to be a very weak joint here in Wagner's harness. Merely on internal evidence it is hard to find any quality in his work that reflects what is recognisable as essentially Greek. Probably Mr. Wallace may take his point as made. But to what cost to himself as a critic?

On p. 122 he tells us "in February he was off again to Paris, goaded by that *olotpos*, that gad-fly, as Prometheus was, of which, for all his boastful talk about Greek drama, he probably had never heard. But he impressed bystanders. They, in their ignorance, were no better off than he was."

Suppose one of Mr. Wallace's readers happens to remember that Prometheus' trouble was *not* a gad-fly, but a vulture and bonds, while the gad-fly's attentions were devoted to his lady visitor Io, soon to be "off again" attended by the gad-fly? Mr. Wallace in another connection comments with an "Oh, Richard!" His reader might not improperly and in the same key ejaculate "Oh, Mr. Wallace!"

But as a brief conspectus the book is not amiss, and it is brightly written. There are an index and a useful Chronological Table.

Mr. Wallace will allow us to point out that "nichts weniger als" is the ordinary German for "anything but"; this removes his difficulty about the critic (p. 31) who wrote what he has translated "Its inventive contents are nothing less than insignificant."—[Ed.]

The Well-tempered Musician. By Francis Toye. Methuen.

They would not make the claim for themselves, but critics are in some sort policemen of the City of Art. If we are to believe Mr. Toye, who devotes a chapter to them, musical critics are in such case that, compared with them, policemen live in realms of endless bliss. However, the most of this entertaining and suggestive little book was evidently written with belt undone and helmet doffed. And we all know how human a policeman is without his helmet. Not to dwell upon the pathos of that thought, this is a happy piece of work, showing the author in an off-duty mood, discussing unofficially but with knowledge, "cases," as it might be over the garden fence with a neighbour.

Not that there is flippancy. Even an ordinary arrestable person could not be flippant about "The Nature of Music," "The Function of Music," to name two of the chapters; and there is more than a tinge of philosophy in the longest of all, that on "Music and Modern Society." But all through, and notably in "Musical Nationalism," the discourse is with tolerance and as man to man. And if the printer has not been happy in his setting of the few Greek characters employed on p. 41, why, there is a translated extract from Aristotle coming pat upon "Board School Curriculum" on p. 46; and this is a democratic age, anyway. Even a stipendiary magistrate, let alone (as they dare to say) a policeman, may be tolerant and even genial upon the right occasions.

Mr. Toye found one of his occasions in the pages of MUSIC AND LETTERS, and much of his matter is, he tells us, re-cast from other periodicals. There is such merit, of thought and treatment, in the several chapters that a want of continuity in the book is to be regretted. But this matters the less that concerning principles he is seldom dogmatic. And even so, nobody will quarrel with: "To listen, then, to music is good, to make music yourself is better—but to make music with your friends is best of all, because the greatest sum of benefits inherent in the nature of the art is thus attainable."

That Mr. Toye can be subtly dogmatic he shows in writing: "'Tausend und eine Nacht,' most ravishing of waltzes, and 'High-School Cadets,' most inspiring of marches."

On a graver plane, the thesis which seems to be advanced, that the sheer merit of a musical composition cannot be proved by any process of analysis, is contentious enough for a whole book—even though one accepts the other thesis, that the verdict of Time means too summary justice.

It is easy (avoiding haply the scythe) to fall back upon Time, in the quandary. But one must remember those his Whirligigs, so apt to trip up the complacent. In the twinkling of an eye are your Schönbergs *vieux jeu* and your Byrds set high again among the branches.

There is indeed a sense of twinklings throughout the book, which may be commended for touching just the points where all lovers of music find their daily differences and yet their love renewed.

Doubtless the criticism of music is difficult and tantalising, but criticism has always been practised upon this and all other arts, and not least profitably upon music.

And after reading what Mr. Toye says here, it is clear that however solemn or unhappy a critic or a policeman may have to be, he is, like the clavier, none the less expressive or useful when he is Well-tempered.

Musicians and Mummies. By H. Klein. Cassell. 21s.

"I maintain that cultivated people were not a jot more ignorant about music than they are to-day. The musical public is now larger and in the main better trained to listen with accurate appreciation, that is all."

And again:—

"We are, I fully believe on the eve of developments more far-reaching than any that I have witnessed, and that is saying much."

There lie more than fifty years of attentive observation between Mr. Klein's "now" and his "then." And between the philosophic tones of these two quotations he runs in this book a full and nimble gamut of his experiences with makers and managers of music.

Let us generously allow one-third of the book to the "Mummies" including the frontispiece of Sir H. Beerbohm Tree made up as Beethoven—and there are still some two hundred large pages in which we may be musically busy with Mr. Klein in two continents. And very busy he is, very numerous are his contacts with prominent people and notable movements. Indeed, it strikes one that on the whole everybody was so busy or so professional (or so inarticulate) that the contacts were not the occasion of much light. Not that the musical celebrities were ever of quite such low candle-power as was Mr. Ibsen who reacted, apparently, to Mr. Klein in the sole, if significant, utterance, "Fine fellow, Archer!"

But, whatever the reasons, it seems that the value of these sympathetic probings and attentions, sustained as they are by real enthusiasm, and admirably as they are recorded, lies not in themselves but in the perspectives that they enable us to form. Quite often, leaving his narrative, Mr. Klein definitely helps us in this very matter. About opera, for instance, "Carl Rosa had very clear ideas as to what was needed for the permanent establishment of English opera in this country. He also achieved more towards the realisation of them than any operatic manager we have ever had." Of concerts, "There were too many concerts fifty years ago, just as there are now." And of chamber-music, "in an executive sense it has gone ahead."

As a pupil of Garcia, and himself formerly a teacher of singing, Mr. Klein's view that the wide copying of the Guildhall School of Music system has been to some extent prejudicial to the art of singing cannot be ignored. Upon this, and upon other points arising in the present book, he has, we suspect, considered judgments to offer us. Let them come from the quiet of the study, and let the telephone-receiver be off, so that "celebrities" cannot ring up to ask whether they are going to be interviewed or not. For—believe it who can—once upon a time some of them really were reluctant. And there may be a throw-back or two, even in this devotedly self-expressive generation.

W. M. M.

The Singer's Art. By H. Gregory Hast. Methuen.

The Teaching of Interpretation in Song. By Dawson Freer. Evans Bros. 2s. 6d.

Singing-masters, as they used to be called—and it should be a title of dignity—work in some degree of isolation. Their methods are largely themselves. When they fling open the studio door curiosity at best

draws us in. But we have often been disappointed, and it is a pleasure to find that in these two studios song is faithfully served.

Mr. Hast's book has with the shorter title the wider scope and some 130 pages to Mr. Freer's 92 and these smaller. Both books necessarily cover plenty of common ground.

Mr. Freer writes ostensibly, in his first sentence, for "the young teacher" (to whom we shall refer again) and he implicitly assumes in his readers the requisite knowledge of the mechanism of the voice. This seems rather rash. But he makes no further assumptions, giving due importance to technique and detailed study. No page is without its points, and there are some shrewd remarks about translations of foreign songs.

Mr. Hast—with "the youngest student" in his eye—writes in the form of letters, addressed now to students and now to teachers, and includes a thorough but simple account of vocal mechanism. Here are no spiky diagrams or pseudo-scientific terms, but such talk as an assured teacher might use in his studio. To "Interpretation," the total subject, ostensibly, of Mr. Freer's book, Mr. Hast gives some 50 of his pages. It is clear that neither teacher considers the subject exhausted, though Mr. Hast may seem at times a shade too dogmatic.

The singer of oratorio will expect to find valuable guidance in Mr. Hast's book, and it is there. We doubt if better value in so small compass can be found elsewhere. And Mr. Hast is happy throughout in his choice of musical illustrations—a feature in which Mr. Freer's book is deficient and by which it would be vastly amended.

Neither book deals seriously with opera.

To the student who is going far we heartily commend "The Singer's Art."

To others less gifted or ambitious Mr. Freer's book will be very helpful.

Both books are noticeably free from cant, pose or faddism.

But Mr. Freer's implied endorsement of "the young teacher" suggests a danger to the future of that Art of Song which so emphatically requires experience and achievement in its teachers, our singing-masters.

W. M. M.

Robert Schumann. By Frederick Niecks. J. M. Dent & Sons. 10s. 6d.

Professor Niecks, to whose memory Sir Alexander Mackenzie pays the tribute of a sympathetic preface, is careful to remind us that, for any biography of Schumann, his own writings and letters, with Clara Schumann's letters and diaries, afford such distinguished, candid and valuable material that additions to these, though they may have relevance to details, must in general and biographically have less than the usual significance. In the present book, indeed, we are impressed more by its evident care, justice and affection than by the degree of the fresh light thrown upon Schumann as artist and man. It should, however, be said that Professor Niecks had always intended and hoped to make a full biography—his chapter on "Sources" explains this—whereas time was only given him to write the series of articles of which the book is mainly composed. These, however, his widow has expanded as far as possible. The work has been done admirably and with know-

ledge. So that we have a succinct and reasoned, and yet a glowing account of that attractive and elusive personality which was Schumann's, and which clearly had lived in the author's heart throughout a long life of service to music; and we have it in excellent English.

The three chapters principally concerned with Schumann's musical contemporaries (other than Clara Wieck) and their inter-action—a theme which the author could have developed to good purpose—are notably interesting, and will be read with the additional pages "Schumanniana" and "Joachim's Reminiscences."

But this is no arid re-statement, re-statement though much of it had to be. The work is done with a pen dipped as deep in love and pity as in ink. A chapter ends:—

"After the Schumanns settled at Düsseldorf (1850) they never revisited Dresden; but Frä. von Lindeman saw and heard them later at Leipzig, where, she says, they were both overwhelmed with applause, and people were to be heard singing on the way home the melodies that they had just heard at the Concert."

We hope, as we feel the author hoped, that the Schumanns heard them too. For the end was very near then.

W. M. M.

Cecil Sharp Memorial Fund.

I shall have the pleasure of handing to the Secretary of the Sharp Memorial Fund the sum of £5 2s. 1d. contributed anonymously as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
N. G. S.	2	6	
P. Q.	10	0	
Abercorn (collected)	5	4	
G. E.	10	0	
Dinkie	7	6	
Queensdale (collected)	5	3	
Jock	12	0	
John (collected)	1	4	
I. E. and G. G.	1	2	
Petrouchka	2	2	0
Innisfree	5	0	

We will leave the list open, in case other friends like to help in this way with small amounts, without standing in the way of any large-hearted cheques that may be sent to

Mrs. Shulldham Shaw,
2, Buckland Crescent,
N.W. 3.

PLAYER-PIANO ROLLS

I. Ordinary music rolls, playable on all instruments that have the standard 88-note tracker bar.

Bax. Scherzo. Aeolian Company ("A. Co.") T 951. A piece of bright, crisp and strong pianoforte music, of natural musical qualities, specially transcribed for "Pianola" performance by the composer.

Beethoven. Quartet in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2. Animatic (Hupfeld, Ltd.) 53307-08-09-10. One of the famous Rasoumovski string quartets, transcribed for performance by four hands on one pianoforte.

Beethoven. Sonata in F, Op. 54. A. Co. T 24637-38. The second movement is in the style of the toccata.

Is difficult to perform on the player-piano, owing to the constant semiquaver structure and the very awkwardly placed accents, which last come frequently on the second semiquaver of a crotchet-beat.

Brahms. Intermezzo, Op. 116, No. 6. A. Co. T 24549. Music of a rich, deep tone.

Holbrooke. Queen Mab. A. Co. T 24648-49-50. An orchestral tone-poem on passages from *Romeo and Juliet*, act 1, scene 4, written when the composer was about twenty-five years old. The pianola transcription is brilliant.

II. Hand-played "Artist" rolls, for all instruments having the standard 88-note tracker.

Godard. Au Matin, Op. 83 (performed by Clarence Adler). A. Co. Roll No. A 813. The spirit of the music is pleasantly in agreement with the poetic title.

Grieg. Scherzo Impromptu, Op. 73, No. 2 (Rudolph Reuter). A. Co. A 825. One of Grieg's most delightful fancies, interpreted to perfection. The music calls for delicate accental pedalling.

Mozart. Fantasia in C minor: Köch-Verz. 396 (Walter Bachmann). Animatic 59142. A work of Mozart's worthy the closest attention of all musicians, by reason of the poetic intensity of the music. The performance is a model of what should be offered to help the player-pianist; the "spreading" of the chords enables the player-pianist to accentuate notes which otherwise would have to be left without stress.

Ravel. Sonatine in F sharp: composed 1905 (Walter Gieseking). Animatic 59864-65. The last movement is of the difficult toccata kind. The first movement is in miniature sonata form. The middle movement is a charming minuet. This work should be studied by help of the printed copy.

Wagner-Liszt. Overture to Tannhäuser (Josef Hofmann). Animatic 50751.

III. Walte-Mignon rolls (Steinway and Sons). Playable (a) on the Walte Electric Reproducing Pianos, and the Walte Foot-propelled Reproducing Pianos; and (b) on all instruments having the standard 88-note tracker.

Beethoven. Sonata in D, Op. 10, No. 8 (Edwin Fischer). Rolls Nos. 1840-41-42. The last movement is difficult in respect of time; it should be studied to the eight-counting, with counts 8 1' 2 given to the opening notes.

Debussy. La Plus que Lent (the composer). Roll 2736. A slow waltz.

Debussy. Preludes: Danses de Delphes; La Cathédrale engloutie; and La Danse de Puck (the composer). Roll 2738. Debussy's own interpretations are naturally illuminating; but his free-time almost compels a study of the music by help of the printed copy.

Schubert. Fantasia in G major, Op. 78 (Kathe Heinemann). Rolls 3846-47-48. This long work (a sonata in four movements) was played by Walter Gieseking at a London recital in October, 1925.

Scriabine. Poème, Op. 32, No. 1 (the composer). Roll 2068.

IV. Playable only on the Aeolian Company's Duo-Art Pianola Piano.

Bartlett. Polka de Concert, Op. 1 (Genevieve Pitot). Roll 6737.

Brahms. Ballade in D minor, Op. 10, No. 1 (Lester Donahue). Based on the Scotch ballad of "Edward."

Burgmein. Venetian Carnival (Robert Ambruster). Roll 6905. The composer's real name is Giulio Ricordi. He was a leading Italian music publisher.

Chopin. Polonaise in A flat, Op. 53 (Eugen d'Albert). Roll 0231.

Scriabine. Poème Satanique, Op. 36 (Leo Sirota). Roll 0232. The "poetic" idea of the poem is the conflict between good and evil in a man's soul.
S. G.

REGISTER OF BOOKS ON MUSIC

THE following list contains a selection of the books on music that have been published since the compilation of the list printed in the last number of MUSIC AND LETTERS. The place of publication has not been added to the publisher's name if the former is the capital of the country or the latter is very well known. All prices quoted are net. In the case of foreign books the price mentioned is that at which the cheapest edition can be purchased in the country in which the book is published. At the present rates of exchange £1 is roughly equivalent to 120 French francs (fr.); to 25 Swiss francs (Fr.); to 20 German marks (M.); 34 Austrian shillings (Sch.); and to 120 Italian lire (L.).

Aesthetics. Cherbuliez, A. E.: *Gedankliche Grundlagen der Musikbetrachtung*. pp. 50. Hug & Co.: Zurich. 2 Fr. 60.
D'Esterre, N.: *Music and its Creators*. pp. 216. Allen & Unwin. 6/-.

Toye, F.: *The Well-Tempered Musician*. A musical point of view, etc. pp. xiii. 209. Methuen. 5/-.

Albeniz. Collet, H.: *Albeniz et Granados*. pp. 244. P. Alcan. 10 fr. [Part of the series "Les Maitres de la Musique."]

Appreciation. Scholes, P. A.: *Everybody's Guide to Broadcast Music, etc.* pp. 237. Milford; Hodder & Stoughton. 3/6.

Bach. Bethge, W., and Götze, W.: *Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685-1750, und sein Wirken in Cöthen, 1717-1723, etc.* illus. pp. 47. The Cöthen Heimatmuseum: Cöthen. 1 M. [A guide to the Bach section of the Heimatmuseum at Cöthen, where Bach lived from 1717 to 1723.]

Franke, F.: *Johann Sebastian Bachs Kirchen-Kantaten, etc.* pp. 87. Reclam. [No. 6565 of Reclam's "Universal-Bibliothek."]

Paccagnella, E.: *L'Elaborazione tematica nelle opere di J. S. Bach: nuovi principii di sviluppo ritmico-melodico*. pp. 51. Arti Grafiche Monza: Monza.

Bach, C. P. E. *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen*. pp. viii. vi. 80. C. F. Kahnt: Leipzig. 7 M. [The fifth edition of the reprint, under W. Niemann's editorship, of the 2nd ed. of the original (1759-62).]

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- English Music.** Klein, H.: *Musicians and Mimmers*. illus. pp. xi. 340. Cassell. 21/-. [A sequel to the author's "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London," 1870-1900, published in 1903.]
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- Folk Song.** Bartók, Béla: *Das ungarische Volkslied*. Versuch einer Systematisierung der ungarischen Bauernmelodien. [With 320 tunes.] pp. iv. 236. 87. W. de Gruyter & Co.: Berlin. 12 M.
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- Gregorian Chant.** Minetti, A.: *Grammatica di canto gregoriano*. Primo corso: nozioni fondamentali e pratica delle melodie più facili. [2nd ed., revised and enlarged.] pp. vii. 123. G. Bardi: Rome. 7 L.
- Handel.** Chop, M.: *Georg Friedrich Händel. Der Messias*. . . Geschichtlich und musikalisch analysiert, etc. pp. 65. Reclam. 40 pf. [No. 5206 of Reclam's "Universal-Bibliothek." A reprint, without alteration, of the edition first published in 1910.]
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- Morris, R. O.**: *Foundations of Practical Harmony and Counterpoint*. pp. x. 144. Macmillan. 7/6.
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- History.** Grunsky, K.: *Musikgeschichte des 17. Jahrhundert*. [2nd revised ed.] pp. 148. De Gruyter and Co.: Berlin. 1 M. 25. [No. 239 of the "Sammlung Götschen."]
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- Liszt.** Corder, F.: *Ferencz (Francois) Liszt*. pp. xi. 169. Kegan Paul; J. Curwen. 7/6. [Part of a new series entitled "Masters of Music."]
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Aesthetics. Cherbuliez, A. E.: *Gedankliche Grundlagen der Musikbetrachtung*. pp. 50. Hug & Co.: Zurich. 2 Fr. 60.
D'Estes, N.: *Music and its Creators*. pp. 216. Allen & Unwin. 6/-.

Toye, F.: *The Well-Tempered Musician*. A musical point of view, etc. pp. xiii. 209. Methuen. 5/-.

Albeniz. Collet, H.: *Albeniz et Granados*. A musical point of view, etc. pp. xiii. 209. Methuen. 5/-.

Appreciation. Scholes, P. A.: *Everybody's Guide to Broadcast Music*, etc. pp. 237. Milford; Hodder & Stoughton. 3/6.

Bach. Bethge, W., and Götze, W.: *Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685-1750, und sein Wirken in Cöthen, 1717-1723*, etc. illus. pp. 47. The Cöthen Heimatmuseum: Cöthen. 1 M. [A guide to the Bach section of the Heimatmuseum at Cöthen, where Bach lived from 1717 to 1723.]

Franke, F.: *Johann Sebastian Bachs Kirchen-Kantaten*, etc. pp. 87. Reclam. [No. 6565 of Reclam's "Universal-Bibliothek."]

Paccagnella, E.: *L'Elaborazione tematica nelle opere di J. S. Bach: nuovi principii di sviluppo ritmico-melodico*. pp. 31. Arti Grafiche Monza: Monza.

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parently designed in the first place to assist children attending the concerts for young people organised by the New York Symphony Orchestra. Some typical programmes given at these concerts are printed at the end of the book.]

Organ. Burgemeister, L.: *Der Orgelbau in Schlesien*. illus. pp. v. 118. CXXXVIII. J. H. E. Heitz: Strassburg. 80 M. [Heft 230 of the "Studien zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte." The narrative section, which covers the period from the earliest times to the present day is succeeded by a dictionary of the chief organ-builders and 24 photographic illustrations of organ-cases, etc.]

The Rotunda. A journal of artistic organ-building and musical progress. The Publishers: London (234, Crown-dale Road, S.W. 9). 2/-. [The trade journal of Messrs. Henry Willis & Sons, the well-known firm of organ-builders, which it is proposed to issue twice yearly for the present. The first number contains articles by Charles Macpherson, W. G. Alcock, Harvey Grace, Rev. N. Bonavia-Hunt, and other authorities.]

Milne, H. F.: *How to Build a Small Two-mannal Chamber Pipe Organ*. A practical guide for amateurs. pp. 166. Musical Opinion. 7/6.

Rangel, F.: *Recherches sur quelques maîtres de l'ancienne facture d'orgues françaises*. pp. 26. H. Herelle. 5 fr. [Deals with the L'Epine's, J. P. Cavallé and Dom. F. Bédos de Celles.]

Palestrina. Ricci, C.: *Il Palestrina*. Discorso tenuto alla r. accademia di S. Cecilia. pp. 26. G. Glingler: Rome. 3 L.

Piano. Niemann, W.: *Das Klavierbuch*. Geschichte der Klaviermusik und ihrer Meister bis zur Gegenwart, etc. [12th ed., greatly enlarged.] pp. xvi. 297. C. F. Kahnt: Leipzig. 6 M.

Piano. See also under Educational.

Pianola. Grew, S.: *The First Book of the Player-Pianist*. pp. 140. Musical Opinion. 5/-.

Psychology. Brehmer, F.: *Melodieauffassung und melodische Begabung des Kindes*. pp. vii. 180. 36. J. A. Barth: Leipzig. 8 M. 40. [Beiheft 86 to the "Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie."]

Rheinberger. Grace, H.: *The Organ Works of Rheinberger*. pp. xi. 180. Novello. 5/-.

Rhythm. Williams, C. F. Abdy:

The Rhythm of Song. pp. 151. Methuen. 7/6.

Schubert. Bie, O.: *Franz Schubert, sein Leben und sein Werk*. illus. pp. 162. Ullstein: Berlin. 4 M.

Schumann. Bedford, H.: *Robert Schumann, his life and work*. pp. xii. 270. Kegan Paul; J. Curwen. 7/6. [Part of a new series entitled "Masters of Music."]

Niecks, F.: *Robert Schumann*. Ed. by Christina Niecks. pp. xiii. 336. Dent. 10/6.

Schütz, Müller, R. H.: *Heinrich Schütz*. pp. 64. Breitkopf. 1 M. 20. Singing. See Voice.

Songs. Scott, H.: *English Song Book*. Collected and edited with an introduction by Harold Scott. pp. xviii. 149. Chapman & Hall. 10/6.

Songs. See also under Rhythm.

Strauss, Johann. Kobald, K.: *Johann Strauss*. pp. 133. "Osterreichischer Verlag für Unterricht; Vienna. 6 Sch.

Lange, F.: *Johann Strauss*. [2nd ed.] pp. 94. Reclam. 40 pf. [No. 5462 of Reclam's "Universal-Bibliothek."]

Troubadours. Gennrich, P.: *Die altfranzösische Rotvrouenge*. pp. 84. Max Niemeyer: Halle.

Violin. Diestel, H.: *Violinteknik und Geigenbau*. Die Violinteknik auf natürlichen Grundlage nebst den Problemen des Geigenbaues. [4th ed.] pp. 181. C. F. Kahnt: Leipzig. 5 M. 50.

Emery, F. B.: *The Violinist's Dictionary*. [New ed., enlarged.] pp. viii. 233. William Reeves: London; C. Scribner's Sons: New York. [This is an incredibly bad book. We transcribe five consecutive entries at random: "Schwanenlied (G.)—Swan song; death song; Schwätzerin (G.)—Gossip; Schweig [sic] (G.)—Swiss; Schweinchen (G.)—Little pig; Schweizerisch (G.)—Swiss." Of what earthly use is this to violinists, or indeed to anybody? We notice also that though there are articles on the symphonies of Brahms, Beethoven, Mozart and others there is not a word about their compositions for solo violin.]

Voice. Hast, H. G.: *The Singer's Art*. Letters from a Singing Master. pp. xi. 181. Methuen. 5/-.

Wagner. Wallace, W.: *Richard Wagner as he lived*. pp. x. 331. Kegan Paul; J. Curwen. 7/6. [Part of a new series entitled "Masters of Music."]

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